

Program Progress Evaluation of the California Northstate College of Medicine

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Overview:

The California Northstate College of Medicine (CNUCOM) is a four-year allopathic college of medicine, founded in 2007, that awards the Medical Doctor (MD) degree only; it does not award any other degrees at this time. As a college within California Northstate University (CNU), it benefits from the ability to leverage university resources to support its operations and future growth. CNUCOM has established a clear mission and vision aligned with the university, community, and the national social needs for the practice of medicine. Furthermore, as a college within CNU, which offers other health profession degrees, the College of Medicine is well positioned to educate and train its medical students in an interprofessional environment, critical to their future practice as physicians, and a requirement of the programmatic accreditation body for medicine, the Liaison Committee for Medical Education (LCME).

Since its founding, CNUCOM has continued to grow and meet all LCME programmatic requirements, and has demonstrated significant efforts and results for continuous improvement in all aspects of the college. Its recent graduates (2 cohorts) have been successful at achieving a match within residency programs, an essential next step for their continued training and future licensure as specialty trained physicians. A significant number of these graduates have chosen primary care specialties (34.7% in 2019, and 45.8% in 2020), and notably, 29% have chosen to remain in the Central Valley area. These outcomes demonstrate CNUCOM's ability to achieve their mission and vision, and to impact the physician shortage within their community and region.

Graduates of CNUCOM report a high degree of satisfaction with their education, with 91.9% responding on the national graduation survey that they agree or strongly agree with the statement, "Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of my medical education." This compares favorably with the national average of 89.2%. Furthermore, results from national standardized exams required for graduation and licensure (the United States Medical Licensure Exam: USMLE) demonstrate that the average scores for CNUCOM students are slightly above the national average.

The achievements of CNUCOM and its students are the result of highly committed and qualified basic science faculty, who provide a small group, case-based presentation curriculum as the scientific basis for medicine, and dedicated clinical faculty, who provide the mentoring, clinical experiences, and training. Together, the faculty members demonstrate a commitment to student education and wellbeing, and support students in meeting the rigorous standards for medical licensure and practice.

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

I. Organization

Strengths: The experienced leadership of Dr. Joseph Silva has enabled CNUCOM to adapt its organization to meet the needs of a young and growing college. These organizational improvements included the founding of additional departments within the college (growing from a single department to three currently), the creation of a new administrative leader positions (the Associate Dean for Medical Education), and the formation of the Dean's Advisory Committee (DAC) to review and approve proposed changes within the curriculum, student progression, clinical sites, staffing, faculty, etc. Furthermore, the establishment of the Office of Institutional Research, Quality, and Assessment to oversee and integrate the processes and outcomes of the faculty, Assessment Committee, and Student Affairs ensures continuity in efforts, planning, and outcomes for the college, and provides a formal, rigorous approach for continuous quality improvement.

Areas for Improvement: None noted at this time. It appears that the organization has achieved stability, an important factor in efficient operations and in the confidence of all constituents in leadership and the organization. However, if additional reorganization is deemed necessary or occurs, faculty, staff, and students should be appropriately informed in advance, and surveyed afterwards with respect to their perspectives on the effectiveness of the changes, and their perspectives on their sense of stability within the college. This will provide leadership the ability to address concerns for a smoother transition. This approach will also support and environment of shared governance and transparency.

II. Strategic Planning and Continuous Quality Improvement

Strengths: Regular review of accreditation standards, strategic goals, and outcomes for all aspects of the College have established a culture of data-driven continuous quality improvement. The incorporation and evaluation of both internally and externally generated data provide a global view of the progress of the CNUCOM; ensure that all LCME programmatic accreditation requirements and expectations are achieved; and ensure that the College of Medicine outcomes remain aligned with the university, the community, and the CNUCOM mission and vision. To date, all processes and outcomes have achieved or surpassed established goals and standards.

Areas for Improvement: None noted. Continue the rigorous and formal review and CQI process.

III. Educational Program

Strengths: Based on all internal and external measures, student performance outcomes demonstrate a rigorous and effective curriculum. The curriculum was developed based on the established competencies and program level objectives as approved by the curriculum committee, the Dean, and the university leadership. Detailed curriculum mapping provides data and information that enables the program to identify gaps, over redundancies, and areas for improvement. Furthermore, the use of a case-based and problem-based pedagogy is preparing graduates for their roles as physicians who are critical thinkers and problem solvers. Interprofessional education opportunities are incorporated into the program, providing opportunities for students to learn and participate in the type of health care teams that are hallmarks of their future practice. The curriculum design, pedagogy, content, and assessment plan all meet LCME Standards and expectations. The Center for Teaching and Learning, and the university's Institute for Teaching and Learning Excellence are excellent resources to support faculty in their endeavors for the development and implementation of

the curriculum. The use of curriculum mapping, regular curricular review, and formal curriculum retreats reinforce the culture and established process for continuous quality improvement.

Areas for Improvement:

Phase A: Two first year courses in particular, Foundations and Hematology, show a significant decrease in recent student evaluation scores compared to scores in previous years. Foundations received a 6.15 in 2018 and a 5.88 in 2019, compared to scores of 7.35 and 7.52 in 2015 and 2016 respectively. The average score for all courses in 2019 is 7.25. With respect to Hematology, the student evaluation score in 2015 was 7.96, whereas in 2019 it is 5.26. These two courses need review to determine the reason(s) for the decline, and an action plan for improvement.

Phase B:

There is a recent downward trend in overall student evaluation scores for the most recent academic year in internal medicine, neurology, and obstetrics/gynecology. This shift appears to be related to less student satisfaction with the learning experience, preceptors, and the clinical site itself for locations listed in the category "other." Outcomes data on external, standardized subject matter ("shelf") exams support the need to review clinical experiences and the learning environment at these sites, and provide additional faculty development. An action plan for improvement should be developed to enable monitoring of steps taken, and outcomes achieved.

(*It is not atypical for new clinical sites to not perform as well as established sites in the first year of accepting students. However, focused faculty development is critical to ensure comparability of experience and learning between clinical sites when using a dispersed model for clinical education.)

IV. Research and Scholarly Productivity

Strengths:

The College provides an environment and facilities supportive of research and scholarly activity. All students are required to participate in a self-directed, scholarly project, and many have been successful in achieving peer-reviewed publications and presentations. Students are supported through travel grants, symposium costs, and faculty commitment to mentoring and training of students in research. The Office of Research supports the growth of research endeavors, and the research infrastructure also continues to develop evidenced by increased seed funds for faculty-initiated research projects, increased equipping of basic science research laboratories, establishment of institutional regulatory boards, including IRB and IACUC, the hiring of a full-time laboratory research manager, and the establishment of the Center for Translational Medicine. These efforts have resulted in the receipt of significant external grant funding by faculty, and a consistent number of publications by faculty and students.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

V. Faculty

Strengths:

The faculty, in general are a strength of CNUCOM. Student achievement on both internal and external outcomes measures (standardized exams, board scores, residency placement) is due in large part to an experienced, knowledgeable, and dedicated faculty. Overall, faculty evaluations by students demonstrate a high degree of satisfaction with the faculty and the educational experience and environment they provide. Furthermore, with the increased time commitment required of a new school to develop, deliver, and assess a curriculum, and fulfill the numerous committee and service responsibilities, the faculty have been productive in scholarly activity (see strengths in research in section IV). The development of a faculty workload model by the Office of Faculty Affairs and the Department of Assessment has provided a data-driven analysis of faculty effort allocation, enabling Department Chairs to better review individual faculty time commitment, and the ability to rebalance assignments, or increase faculty numbers as appropriate. There are extensive offerings for faculty development for teaching, assessment, research, and professional development.

Areas for Improvement:

Faculty retention has improved within the last 2 years, but attention needs to be provided to ongoing activities supportive of faculty wellbeing and professional development. Focused faculty development should be implemented for clinical faculty to ensure that the clinical learning experiences and the faculty provided assessments of students are comparable across all clinical sites.

VI. Student Support

Strengths:

CNUCOM provides robust student support for student success and wellbeing. Data from the graduation questionnaire demonstrated that 84% of CNUCOM graduates (compared to 72.3% of medical school graduates nationally) agree or strongly agree with the statement “My medical school has done a good job of fostering and nurturing my development as a person.” Similarly, 96% of CNUCOM graduates (compared to 91.8% of medical school graduates nationally) agree or strongly agree with the statement, “My medical school has done a good job of fostering and nurturing my development as a future physician.” The support network for students supported by the Office of Student Affairs, inclusive of an early warning system for academic difficulty, the College Master Program, career and specialty advisors, tutoring, mental health counseling, career development program, workshops for study skills’ development, and numerous personal wellness activities, all provide a positive and supportive learning environment for students. The increased number of student interest groups and wellness/wellbeing activities are in response to student need, and demonstrate the commitment of the Student Affairs leadership and staff to student success. All of these endeavors meet all LCME accreditation standards and expectations.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Summary:

CNUCOM continues to demonstrate a commitment to academic excellence and continuous quality improvement in all areas. It meets, and often exceeds programmatic requirements and expectations by the LCME, the accrediting body for medical schools in the United States and Canada. The graduates of CNUCOM are highly competitive on a national basis for residency placement, and

continue to score at or above national means on all examinations and measures required for graduation, licensure, and excellence in professional performance.

The ongoing growth and achievements of CNUCOM are further evidenced by the increasing demand for the program, with applications for admission totaling 4,265 in 2019 for 96 seats. Both students and faculty have continued to be recognized by internally and externally for their achievements through research and service.

In summary, CNUCOM has implemented a rigorous, data-driven, continuous improvement culture through processes that provide for regular review of all aspects of the program, and require the development, implementation and outcomes monitoring of action plans; key to the success of the College in meeting its mission and vision.

PROGRAM REVIEW: California Northstate University- College of Medicine

External Review

Program: Doctor of Medicine Degree Date of Review: June 3 through July 26, 2020

Reviewer: Betty Sundberg, EdD.

External Visit Summary

The External Review of the Doctor of Medicine degree for California Northstate University – College of Medicine was conducted through the period of June 3 through July 26, 2020, with documents provided by the University. Primary documents were: 1) CNUCOM Program Review Document, and 2) the extensive CNUCOM Appendices of support materials.

Following a preliminary review of early materials, additional information was requested to ensure the assessment fully addressed the most current preparation of the University-College specifically related to expectations of the institutional accreditor of WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC). The College of Medicine was immediately responsive, providing both an updated CNUCOM Program Review Document, and CNUCOM Appendices. Both documents included significant additional and supplemental information to allow the External Review to accurately reflect the status of the University and College.

Following is a Summary of External Reviewer’s Findings:

Overview: Areas of Strength and Commendations

California Northstate has successfully accomplished program accreditation (LCME) for provisional status (2019) and will be considered for full accreditation in March 2021, WSCUC Initial Accreditation is in place and the University has successfully graduated its first cohort of students with an earned MD degree.

Using the WSCUC Rubric for Assessment of the Quality of Academic Program Outcomes, the University/College scored Highly Developed on all six criteria. Of significance was supplemental detail provided on 2. Analysis of Evidence About Program Quality and Viability, and enhanced detail on 2.A. Evidence of Program Quality related to Student Data/Student Learning and Success, and Faculty. Additional relevant and applicable information was provided on 2B. Evidence of Program Viability and Sustainability.

Using the WSCUC Rubric Assessing the Integration of Student Learning Assessment into the Review, the University was ranked as Highly Developed on all six criteria. The updated Appendices: Appendix A: CNUCOM Program Review Handbook and Appendix B: CNUCOM Assessment Manual, with supportive narratives in the CNUCOM Program Review document, effectively addressed expectations confirming educational effectiveness for the institution.

Observations

The University strengthened the report for program review by providing updated source documents addressing specifics of the accomplishment of the College. The 3. Summary Reflections was particularly insightful, incorporating “intentional and coordinated measurement and reflection of strengths and weaknesses since our inception.”, coupled with 4. Future Goals and Planning for Improvement.

These CNUCOM documents aligned with WSCUC expectations, documented a critical analysis of criteria assessed and accomplishments validated. Examples from the Appendices, of Appendix P: Class of 2019 AAMCMGQ Student Evaluation Response, and Appendix S: M2 Student Evaluation Scores amply evidence student achievements. Details on Student Data, coupled with specifics on Student Learning and Success and Student Satisfaction reinforced the affirmation of student awareness of the intentionality by which the College has created, applied, assessed, and affirmed proposed and evidenced outcomes.

Appendix K: Sample Course Syllabi with Course Learning Outcomes, reviewed in context with the Syllabus Generator for New/Elective Courses, and the Future Plans to improve from “Developed” to “Proficient” (with source document examples page 324 of the Appendices) affirms the intention of the College to continue its forward momentum, validating evidence-based instruction/learning on all levels.

The University has taken the opportunity to include the actual timing, process, and sequence of Program Review and Assessment, as detailed in the Program Review Handbook and Assessment Manual, explaining the timing by which the processes are implemented. Including detail on what took place with the most recent review, and plans and timing for subsequent steps, completes the picture for the external review.

Recommendations

CNUCOM has demonstrated accomplishment on many fronts over its short academic history. Continuing this forward momentum, as proposed with Strategic Planning, and the commitment necessary to support and reinforce Planning and Budgeting, while maintaining an ongoing awareness of the criteria by which the processes of Program Review and Assessment are conducted, validated, and communicated will be vital to its continued success.

Specific Details of the External Review

Background of Program Review Process - CNU

California Northstate University (CNU) prepared a Program Review document, and a document of Appendices (June 2020), establishing the process used by the University for developing, delivering, and assessing the educational effectiveness of the Doctor of Medicine degree. This material was provided to the External Reviewer.

As stated in their document, the University developed and delivered the program from its inception in Fall of 2015, through graduation of the first students in Spring 2020; this included assessment of five cohorts of students, and the evaluation of graduating classes.

The University has achieved program accreditation with LCME to the level of Provisional Accreditation, secured in June 2019 and secured regional accreditation with the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) in 2015.

Resources for the Program Review – External Reviewer

The External Review of the MD Degree for CNU, consisted of the following: 1) Review and assessment of the prepared CNU Program Review Document; and 2) CNU Appendices. Resource materials used for this process used by the External Reviewer, included the following WSCUC-created materials: a) “Suggested Approaches for Evaluating Program Review”, b) the WSCUC Program Learning Outcomes Rubric for assessing the quality of academic Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), and c) the WSCUC Program Review Rubric, assessing integration to student learning into the Program Review.

Rationale: The WSCUC Program Learning Outcomes (PLO) Rubric assesses if the PLOs are appropriate to the program subject; the Program Review Rubric assesses the effectiveness of student learning within the review itself. Both processes are appropriate and applicable to the requested External Review.

The First Stage of the External Review was Assessment of the Quality of Program Learning Outcomes

This stage of the Review considered the following Criteria:

Comprehensive List

Program learning outcomes (PLOs) for the CNUCOM MD program are:

1. **Patient Care.** Students must provide evidence-based care that is compassionate, appropriate, and effective for the promotion of health and treatment of illness. Students should be able to evaluate relevant diagnostic information.
2. **Medical and Scientific Knowledge.** Students must demonstrate knowledge about established and evolving biomedical and clinical sciences. They must showcase an ability to apply this knowledge to the practice of medicine. Students should be able to appraise and assimilate scientific evidence into their own ongoing learning, research, and patient care.
3. **Communication and Interpersonal Skills.** Students must demonstrate compassionate and effective interpersonal communication skills toward patients and families necessary to

deliver effective medical care and promote shared decision making. Students must be able to articulate information and ideas (written and oral) in an organized and clear manner to educate or inform patients, families, colleagues, and community.

4. **Professionalism.** Students must demonstrate a commitment to the highest standards of professional responsibility and adherence to ethical principles. Students must display the personal attributes of compassion, honesty, integrity, and cultural competence in all interactions with patients, families, and the medical community.
5. **Healthcare Systems.** Students must demonstrate knowledge of and responsibility to the larger context of health care (social, behavioral, economic factors). They should have the ability to effectively call on system resources to provide optimal care.
6. **Reflective Practice and Personal Development.** Student must be able to reflect upon their experiences with the goal of continual improvement. They must also demonstrate habits of analyzing experiences that affect their well-being, relationships with groups and individuals. They must demonstrate self- motivation, and awareness and responsiveness to their own limitations.

Rubric Score: Highly Developed

The list is reasonable, appropriate, and comprehensive, with clear distinctions for graduate expectations. Faculty has agreed on explicit criteria for assessing students' level of mastery of each outcome.

Assessable Outcomes

Outcomes are stated in sufficient detail to provide for assessment and validation, with examples of student performance at varying levels for each outcome. Detail on Student Data, Student Learning and Success materials fully explain and affirm acquisition of student learning.

Rubric Score: Highly Developed

Outcomes describe how students can demonstrate their learning. Faculty has agreed on explicit criteria statements, such as rubrics, and has identified examples of student performance at varying levels for each outcome.

Alignment

There is clear alignment between the subject-matter of the outcomes and coursework appropriate to the program of study (MD). Additionally, academic, subject-specific curricula and program accreditation detail, with the support of curriculum mapping, provides evidence of measures of increasing levels of proficiency. The College has made very transparent the Allocation of Resources required and available for the school and program success.

Rubric Score: Highly Developed

Pedagogy, grading, the curriculum, relevant student support services and co- curriculum are explicitly and intentionally aligned with each outcome. Curriculum map indicates increasing levels of proficiency

Assessment Planning

Components of assessment include grade distributions, Summative Exams, USMLE Scores, Shelf Exams, Preceptor and Student evaluations, and comparability studies across clerkships. Areas of improvement are noted and verified data have been identified. Ranking is provided for each of the components of assessment noted, with clear information on additional data needed and proposed changes to the process. The Performance Analysis of Course Learning Outcomes, coupled with details of the CNUCOM Assessment Manual affirm plans and processes for the review; additional detail is provided on resources and services for students requiring additional assistance.

Rubric Score: Highly Developed

The program has a fully articulated, sustainable, multi-year assessment plan that describes when and how each outcome will be assessed and how improvements based on findings will be implemented. The plan is routinely examined and revised, as needed.

The Student Experience

The following statement can be readily validated with concrete examples of course syllabi, that affirm the student's awareness of expectations of each course within the program, "Learning outcomes are embedded within the curriculum and assessed in students' programs of study at points designated for mastery. Learning outcomes at all levels have corresponding rubrics that identify key indicators of achievement and varying levels of student performance." Ample documentation is provided verifying student accomplishment, student engagement in the review process, and responsiveness to student recommendations.

Rubric Score: Highly Developed

Students are well-acquainted with program outcomes and may participate in the creation and use of rubrics. They are skilled at self-assessing in relation to the outcomes and levels of performance. Program policy calls for inclusion of outcomes in all course syllabi, and they are readily available in other program documents.

The Second Stage of the External Review was Integration of Student Learning Assessment into Program Reviews

This stage of the Review considered the following Criteria:

Elements of the Self-Study

Learning outcomes are established for the student, for the program and for the institution, with comprehensive engagement by Committees of faculty. Additionally, the CNU Program Review document states "CNUCOM has an annual curricular review process where course and faculty evaluations, student survey results, and student learning outcomes are compiled in an annual Assessment Report and reviewed at the annual Curriculum Planning Retreat to support course

improvement, faculty teaching, and student and organizational learning. This process has resulted in continued improvements in program quality and reinforcement of CNUCOM's dedication to its mission." The Assessment Manual provided substantive detail on the policy and practices related to assessment, including details on expectations for the External Review. A full segment of the Manual addressed WSCUC expectations and how those expectations would be addressed and affirmed.

Rubric Score: Highly Developed.

Faculty are required to evaluate the program's student learning outcomes, annual assessment findings, bench-marking results, subsequent changes, and evidence concerning the impact of these changes. They present a plan for the next cycle of assessment studies.

Process of Review

As noted above, there are several components of the program review data beyond the grades, including both direct and indirect evidence, to include clear-cut evaluation of outcomes. The processes for Assessment and Evaluation are fully detailed, with evidence of Student Learning reinforcing verification of program quality and viability.

Rubric Score: Highly Developed

Well-qualified internal and external reviewers evaluate the program's learning outcomes, assessment plan, evidence, benchmarking results, and assessment impact. They give evaluative feedback and suggestions for improvement. The department uses the feedback to improve student learning.

Planning Budgeting:

The Program Review data addresses budget and future planning specifically. The CNUCOM Program Document reinforces expectations with 3. Summary Reflections, and 4. Future Goals and Planning for Improvement. These materials, coupled with the Strategic Planning documentation and Curriculum Planning support the understanding and appreciation for the need, and access to appropriate resources with the University commitment to support these efforts. The Program document detail on Allocation of Resources, addresses resource requirements and affirms the University/College commitment to providing those resources.

Rubric Score: Highly Developed

The campus systematically integrates program reviews into planning and budgeting processes, e.g., through negotiating formal action plans with mutually agreed-upon commitments.

Annual Feedback on Assessment Efforts

The Program Review Report details the process for Continuous Quality Improvement, with an explanation of the institution-wide comprehensive program review and states that results from these integrated processes are used to make improvements in teaching, learning, resource allocation, and support services; documentation supporting these commitments is evidenced with Appendices. These documents provide evidence and examples of the program

review/assessment processes being communicated broadly, identifying proposed improvement, and detail on resources identified or required to effect change. There is a comprehensive approach to affirming efforts made to address where outcomes have not been achieved and attention directed for action to students who fail to meet projected outcome. Evidence is provided for changes made because of review and assessment, along with resultant outcomes.

Rubric Score: Highly Developed

A well-qualified individual or committee provides annual feedback on the quality of outcomes, assessment plans, assessment studies, benchmarking results, and assessment impact. Departments effectively use the feedback to improve student learning. Follow-up activities enjoy institutional support

The Student Experience

The CNU Program Review document and document of Appendices provided expansive examples to address the student role in the assessment review process. Appendices L: Phase A Performance Analysis of Course Learning Outcomes, Appendix M: USMLE Exam Results, Appendix N: Phase A Student Grades Summary and Appendix O: Comparability Study, all provide validation of the student experience and accomplishment. Appendix P: Class of 2019 AAMCMMSGQ Student Evaluation Responses also reinforce student engagement in the process of Program Review and Assessment.

Rubric Score: Highly Developed

Students are respected partners in the program review process. They may offer poster sessions on their work, demonstrate how they apply rubrics to self-assess, and/or provide their own evaluative feedback.