

UND SMHS Strategic Plan Individual Unit Report for 2022

GOAL 8 for **Physician Assistant Studies**

LEARNING

UND SMHS Strategic Plan Goal 8: *The SMHS will enhance its purposes of education, service, and discovery by focusing additional efforts toward achieving the broad goals stated in the School's Healthcare Workforce Initiative.*

1. Describe if/how your unit has addressed this goal.

As was last year, the admission process for the DPAS involves a published preference for ND residents as well as those from bordering states along with those from rural and/or underserved communities. The 5-year matriculant average of those from the tri-state area (ND, MN & SD) is ~81% with ~50% from ND. The most recent class accepted has 57% of students from ND which, while surely provides strength in meeting our mission, is cause for great concern in terms of clinical placement availability, especially with increased competition for clinical sites.

While we don't have data yet from the Class of 2022, of those employed from graduating class of 2021, 57% of graduates are working in primary care fields which is greater than the five-year average of 48% of UND PA graduates in primary care. This is impressive given the national statistic of 24% of PAs working in primary care (2020 Statistical Profile of Certified Physician Assistants © NCCPA 2020). Also, within the same survey of the 2021 graduates, 48% are working in rural/underserved areas (37% 5-year average) and of these 91% (all but one) are working in rural/underserved primary care.

2. Describe how your efforts are being assessed.

The matriculant data above shows how the DPAS is dedicated and continues to train PAs from ND and surrounding states. With the limiting factor of clinical site availability, we have truly reached a "tipping point" of ND matriculants. Conversations of adjusting enrollment numbers have occurred at the level of admissions due to the clinical site limitations. There is great concern for the sustainability of the current placement process and structure which will eventually lead to a smaller entering class size and/or a return to a more national impact pending clinical site availability elsewhere.

The graduate data above shows that the DPAS continues to meet the primary care mission along with the emphasis to rural/underserved populations. Consistently, UND PA graduates choose primary care fields at a much higher rate than evidenced by national data; and many of those graduates are in rural or underserved areas.

3. Describe how your unit analyzed these data and what assessments were determined.

The DPAS feels strongly about meeting the mission of the program which has been foundational over the past 52 years. The data is robust to support rural primary care and yet, there seems to be continued challenges for graduates to obtain employment in primary care, and even more so post pandemic. Graduates often desire positions in primary care; however, jobs are scarce with typical trends seen toward the specialties. Advocacy of the profession continues to be paramount to creating PA positions in clinical venues of interest. Consistently, professional advocacy is a constant for faculty and students as the profession has less history than other health disciplines.

4. Describe how your unit will implement any further changes and what barriers may exist.

Professional advocacy efforts on the part of the DPAS and the SMHS are needed to encourage clinical practice sites and hospitals to expand hiring practices, by training and retaining PA students and clinicians. Conversations need to continue related to the SMHS supporting clinical placement for PA students.

PROVIDE A RATING OF YOUR PROGRESS ON THIS GOAL: ● On Track