Why Health Humanities?

Humanities programs focusing on health and healthcare delivery in their cultural, historical, aesthetic, and political contexts complement efforts of health professions schools to recruit students who are patient-centered, ethically intelligent, skilled in communication, and competent with diverse populations.

Recent studies report benefits for students completing baccalaureate Health Humanities programs including improved performance in health professions school, in healthcare delivery, and in healthcare leadership. Health Humanities programs are also increasingly preparing students for an array of roles in government, the healthcare industry (including marketing, sales, medical research, consulting, and insurance), civic engagement, and administration in the private and public sectors.¹

¹ This report covers all of the baccalaureate programs in the U.S. For the purposes of this report, we have not included post-baccalaureate programs, graduate programs, or Community College (associate degree) programs.
MEDICAL EDUCATION

Exposure to Health Humanities at the baccalaureate level sets the foundation for students to “understand the role of multiple disciplines...in generating more complex knowledge of health and illness,” as well as preparing pre-health professions students to value arts and humanities content in professional education, according to a study from Canada’s first Health Humanities baccalaureate program. Data speaking specifically to students who study Health Humanities at the baccalaureate level and matriculate to medical school suggest that the longitudinal benefits of this education include:

Strength of Preparation

Studies have shown that baccalaureate preparation in Health Humanities complements and even enhances medical school preparation and performance. In comparison with premedical science students, premedical humanities students demonstrate:

- Equivalent MCAT performance
- Equal or superior academic and clinical performance during medical school or residency
- Higher likelihood of earning academic honors
- Increased clinical research interest and performance
- Greater understanding of structural inequality and its relationship to health disparities

Interpersonal Skills

Increasingly, medical education is calling for well-rounded students able to work effectively in healthcare teams and with a diverse patient population. Humanistic inquiry and skill-building in baccalaureate classrooms may prepare students for the social nuances of successful care. There is a higher tendency among premedical humanities students to demonstrate:

- Empathy
- Skilled communication and interpersonal skills
- Patient-centered attitudes
- Decision-making for individualized patient care
- Enhanced ability to relate to others

Leadership and Service

In addition to enhancing patient and team relationships, premedical humanities training fosters prosocial choices among future providers of care. One study has shown increased leadership and service among students with premedical humanities training:

- Leadership, including medical honor society membership and college commencement awards
- Service, including extracurricular involvement

REFERENCES

3. The program is the Health Humanities minor at University of Toronto Scarborough, launched in 2017.

EXPLAINING BENEFITS BEYOND MEDICINE

Baccalaureate education, particularly in a liberal arts model, is an ideal time for students to develop skills valuable not only to providing humanistic healthcare across a wide range of healthcare fields but also for delivering social services, pursuing advocacy in civic life and policy, and navigating their own or their loved ones’ illness experiences. One pilot study has found that baccalaureate Health Humanities education cultivates habits of mind that prepare students for critical and creative thinking, identification of internal biases, and ethical reasoning in decision-making processes—all of which are critical skills for participating in the complex system of U.S. healthcare on individual, professional, and collective levels. Another study of a pilot survey course in medical humanities and social medicine reported positive feedback from students who were challenged to “think about wellness beyond biological function, to include...civic engagement, function within and with family units, and across stages of the life course.”

Self-reported benefits from students include an awareness of the meaning of illness/wellness/care for individual patients from socially diverse positions; the intricate relationships among technology, meaningful care, and policy; the great need for health advocacy; and the importance and challenges of effective communication with multiple and diverse stakeholders. Because the experience and management of health involves all citizens, health humanities education is relevant and vital to all students at the baccalaureate level.
Defining Baccalaureate Health Humanities

What counts as a baccalaureate Health Humanities Program? In collecting these data, we identified programs through searching online sources and public repositories, listserv survey responses, and direct communication with programs from 2012-2020. Programs were selected if they met the following criteria:

- Undergraduate (baccalaureate) level
- Located within the 50 U.S. states
- Minimum requirement of one humanities course with additional humanities or social science electives
- If bioethics is the required humanities course, there are additional humanities electives
- Focus on health or medicine

New Reporting Code for Medical/Health Humanities

As of 2020, you can submit IPEDS program data for your degree program (BA or BS) or certificate under the new reporting code “Medical/Health Humanities” (CIP code 51.3204). Begin by asking your Institutional Research Officer how changes to CIP code reporting are made at your institution. Benefits of switching to this code include immediate visibility to pre-health prospectives when they search for baccalaureate schools offering a pre-health curriculum, and longer term benefits include acquiring demographic and graduation rate data that will support program growth nationwide. For more information, see nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/.

Growing Number of Programs

At a time when Liberal Arts education, and humanities programs in particular, are under fire in many public quarters, programs in the Health Humanities are experiencing dramatic growth. Since the turn of the century alone (from 2000 to March 2020) the number of Health Humanities programs has increased nearly seven fold from 15 to 102, with another 5 known programs currently in development.

Total U.S. Baccalaureate Health Humanities Programs

Program Types

Approximately a quarter of baccalaureate Health Humanities programs are majors, and these majors typically take one of two approaches:

1) About half of these majors require at least some pre-requisite science courses alongside humanities and social science courses.

2) The other half do not require any hard sciences or only offer such courses as optional electives.

The minor is by far the most popular format, likely because it easily complements health profession graduate school pre-requisites in science and math. Certificate programs are growing in popularity as well, with 8 new certificate programs approved since 2017.

U.S. Baccalaureate Health Humanities Programs by Type

Key

- Major Only
- Major + Minor
- Minor Only
- Certificate
- Concentration
Distribution of Institutions Across the United States

34 of 50 states currently house an institution with at least one baccalaureate Health Humanities program, with a greater saturation of institutions in the Eastern half of the United States. The greatest concentration of institutions is in Texas and Pennsylvania; the latter state was home to the first Department of Humanities incorporated into a College of Medicine (1967, Penn State College of Medicine).

Map Legend

- 0 Institutions
- 1 Institutions
- 2 Institutions
- 3 Institutions
- 4 Institutions
- 5 Institutions
- 6 Institutions
- 7 Institutions
- 8 Institutions
- 10 Institutions
### KNOWN PROGRAMS IN DEVELOPMENT STAGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Institution</th>
<th>Program Name (if known)</th>
<th>Date Founded</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Minor</th>
<th>Certificate</th>
<th>Concentration</th>
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<td>Duke Univ. (NC)</td>
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<td>Dev.</td>
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### References

1. This Certificate is available on both the ASU Tempe and ASU West campuses.
3. This bi-college program is jointly administered by both institutions.
5. Formerly “Cultures of Science and Medicine” Track 1: Life Sciences.
7. A humanities course is not required, but the program offers a core course in Medical Humanities and multiple, diverse humanities electives. Major started in 2017.
8. Minor began in 2006 as “Medical Humanities,” became “Health Care Humanities” in 2012, and changed to “Health Humanities” in 2017; Major is anticipated to begin in Fall 2020.
10. Minor is called “Health Care Ethics.” These degree programs are offered out of the Albert Gnaegi Center for Health Care Ethics, while the Medical Humanities minor is offered out of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.
12. While the official track designation of “Ethics and Medical Humanities” was first formalized in 2008, students have been incorporating ethics and humanities classes into their highly individualized Areas of Concentration within the Major since the 1970s.
13. Major is a “Specialization” within the Philosophy Major.
14. Certificate named “Medical Humanities and Bioethics” until 2013. Completion of the Certificate is a requirement of the Medicine, Health and Society Major.
17. Minor offered in association with Honors Carolina. Beginning Fall 2020, program will also offer a BA/MA Dual Degree in English & Comparative Literature with a concentration in Literature, Medicine, and Culture.
18. Minor is called “Health Care Ethics.” These degree programs are offered out of the Albert Gnaegi Center for Health Care Ethics, while the Medical Humanities minor is offered out of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.
22. Original title was “Undergraduate Minor in Medical History and Ethics.”

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To download the most current version of this document, or to provide new information or update existing information on a Health Humanities baccalaureate program, please visit: [case.edu/medicine/bioethics/education/health-humanities](http://case.edu/medicine/bioethics/education/health-humanities).