

Transcript – BaccMD program

A new *Voices of UMass Chan* podcast episode

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Thank you for listening to the *Voices of UMass Chan*, featuring the people, ideas and advances of UMass Chan Medical School.

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Jennifer Berryman

This is the *Voices of UMass Chan* podcast. I'm your host. Jennifer Berryman. Today, we learn about a program at UMass Chan Medical School that was started 12 years ago to provide crucial support and guidance for diverse and underrepresented students who dream of going to medical school. The program is called the Baccalaureate MD, or BaccMD program for short. And, since its inception, the BaccMD program has been a pipeline for students from the four UMass undergraduate campuses to come to UMass Chan this year, the program is expanding. It's open now to students at Worcester State University too. 1:07

We're fortunate to be joined by Dr Tracy Kadian. She is the associate dean of admissions for the TH Chan School of Medicine at UMass Chan, and a professor of family medicine and community health. And we're joined by Professor Jeffrey Nichols. He's the chair of the Pre-med Advisory Committee at Worcester State University. Thank you both for making time to talk to us.

Tracy Kedian

Thank you. It's great to be here.

Jennifer Berryman

Dr. Kedian, let's start with you. Tell us about the BaccMD program. Who's it for? What is it?

Tracy Kedian

The BaccMD program is UMass Chan's, I would say, oldest and most substantial, most robust pre medical pathway program. It was created over a decade ago to create a structure which provides support to undergraduate students at our UMass campuses, to give them the extra guidance and extra services that it might need to be successful in the med school application process, and to really continue to grow UMass Chan as the state's public medical school that serves the community and the commonwealth.

Jennifer Berryman

So maybe students who would be appropriate for this would be like the first in their families to go to college, or some is that the audience and the students who you're trying to attract and support absolutely.

Tracy Kedian

Eligible students at this time, of course, after the recent Supreme Court decision, include anyone who is the first in their family to go to college. Include those who from financially or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. Students from diverse racial backgrounds are strongly encouraged to apply that, of course, is not a separate eligibility criterion.

Jennifer Berryman

So what's the main goal of the program, and how does it work? If I apply, what am I applying to?

Tracy Kedian

We reach out to students in their sophomore year who have continued along the pathway of feeling more and more confident that work and the health professions is what they want for their future. So if they're intending to apply for medical school, they can apply and enroll during their sophomore year to begin that following summer, and it starts by a wonderful enrichment program on the UMass Chan campus, where students will stay at Worcester State. We collaborate with Worcester State to use their dormitories. They're provided with transportation, housing, food and a stipend to spend eight weeks on the UMass Chan campus, during which time they get a robust array of enrichment experiences. They are

provided with test taking and studying and learning support through the Learning Resource Center at UMass Amherst. This is a relatively recent addition, and it is going to be a wonderful opportunity for these students to get a leg up in their preparation for that challenging MCAT exam. They get some advanced courses in English and in physics. English is a significant part of the MCAT exam, and they need to have high levels of English comprehension to be able to pass that MCAT section. So this is a really important addition, plus in-person experiences. With successful physicians who may come from the same community or have this have similar identities, so that if you can see it, you can be it kind of experience.

Jennifer Berryman

And you said it was one of the most, if not the most robust pipeline program that UMass Chan has invested in since launching in 2012. One hundred and 66 students from the four UMass undergraduate campuses have enrolled in the program that is, must be a great success.

Tracy Kedian

Yes, we're really pleased. And you know, while 42 to 43 of those students have wind up going to medical school, other students have gone into other health professions. And we consider, you know, every health professions outcome that a student achieves to be absolutely a win. So we're excited about how strong the program and has been and the expansion that we're doing now,

Jennifer Berryman

We'll talk more in a minute about the Worcester State addition to the back MD program this year. First, let's hear from two students who have experienced it firsthand. They went through the back MD program and are now students in the T.H. Chan School of Medicine.

Isabella Izidoro

My name is Isabella Izidoro and I'm currently a second-year medical student at UMass Chan. I was born in Brazil. I came to the United States when I was one year old with my mom and my dad. Both my parents didn't speak English. I felt like all my peers knew what they were doing with college applications. I didn't really have help at home. I was able to graduate from Everett High School and attend UMass Amherst. My experience with BaccMD, I started the summer after my sophomore year. The first Latina doctor I ever met was at BaccMD program. Dr. (Mattie Casiel), she came to talk about her work in public health and clinical medicine. I remember having tears in my eyes because I saw myself in that position. someone who might not have the same story as me, but very similar

background made it. And it just felt like the glass ceiling could be broken. And that was very impactful for me that summer. And seeing that medicine is awesome. I was really in love with medicine before the Bacc MD program but having all these doctors come in and be so excited about medicine really continue to feel the fire inside me. if you get the chance to go through the BaccMD program, take it. It was the best experience I've had. I got to know so many peers who are passionate about medicine, who are underrepresented like me. It really opened my eyes, and I wouldn't trade it for the world.

Diego Marroquin

My name is Diego Marroquin and I'm a first-year medical student. I was born in Guatemala, and I lived there until I was 15 years old. When I got to college, I actually found out about the BaccMD program through a Facebook ad. The BaccMD program has really been the foundation to my success, not only as an undergraduate student, but also as a medical student and future physician, because I'm a first generation college students. So even just going into medicine, I had no idea what to expect. I didn't have anyone in my family to guide me or to give me advice. And through the program, I was exposed to various aspects of the medical field, and I learned about the social determinants of health and how they can impact patients, lives and health outcomes. 4:07 And that's why I became interested in medicine.

Jennifer Berryman

Dr Kedian, what does it feel like for you to hear Diego and Isabella share their stories?

Tracy Kedian

So exciting. I can't even tell you to get to know these students while they're working so hard to achieve everything that they've achieved, and then see them enter medical school and really thrive. These students really stay in touch with us too after they have become enrolled students, and so we just continue to have that glowing feeling for their entire time at UMass Chan.

Jennifer Berryman

Let's talk now about the expansion of the program. As we said, initially, it was open to graduates of the or students at the four UMass undergraduate campuses now students at Worcester State University. Why was it so important? And Jeffry, feel free to jump in here. And Dr Kedian and why was it so important to expand the program?

Tracy Kedian

We've established a successful model with the program. And so now the goal is really to increase the numbers of medical students who are who are becoming successful because of this program. It you know, the goal of UMass Chan Medical School is to serve the Commonwealth, to create physicians who will take care of their communities in the commonwealth. And so part of that service is to reach out to students who are originally from the local area. So a connection with Worcester State just seemed very natural.

Jennifer Berryman

And so Jeffry, tell us about what the response has been like from your students.

Jeffry Nichols

Well, it was, I'd like to say, first, the response that I had, and that was just the so appreciative that UMass would reach out to us and recognize that we do have a student population that would benefit from this. The students that I've spoken to 8:10 we have four students who are applying right now are really excited to hear about this program, to have this opportunity, and that was the impression I got from Isabella and Diego as well, that it was the appreciation of the opportunity of recognizing what they were given and what it meant to them. And I'm hoping that our students now that are applying and, in the future, will have that same opportunity to see just how amazing this program is.

Jennifer Berryman

You mentioned that four students have expressed interest and are in the process of applying. Do you have target numbers in mind?

Jeffry Nichols

I would love to see us get half a dozen, a dozen students applying. Obviously, not everyone is going to be able to get into it, but I think them recognizing that this is available. And I think along with that, is also the Summer Enrichment Program, which is another program that they should be aware of, and just realizing that UMass is there and that it's not out of their reach, I think that really motivates a lot of students, because, as Tracy was saying, the if you're local to Worcester, you know Worcester, and to be able to stay in Worcester and go to medical school and serve your community, we have so many students who, I hear them saying that over and over again, it's like my top choice is UMass. And hopefully I get in, and I'm looking forward to seeing this program increase those numbers.

Jennifer Berryman

And in terms of students from undergraduate universities, whether it's a UMass or Worcester State, are there certain majors that we focus on recruiting to the BaccMD

program, or is it really open to anyone in any major who. Expresses an interest in work, in pursuing medical school.

Jeffrey Nichols

We put out a call when this program was first established to all of our biology, chemistry, biotech, and I believe psychology students and we just we cast a wide net. Not everyone's interested in medical school or a health related field, but we thought that was sort of the first step is, let's catch as many of these people as we can, and then in smaller meetings, both one on one advising and meetings that we might have, you know, chemistry department get together or biology department get together that we're trying to get that information out. So I would love to see any of the students, regardless of their background, who have an interest in becoming a physician or becoming related to the health care industry that they're able to take advantage of this

Jennifer Berryman

If students are just learning about this, they want to learn more. They're intrigued. What do they need to know about applying? What is the timeline, the deadline, and what do they need for a strong application?

Tracy Kedian

The application is usually during the student's sophomore year, and opens towards the end of November and is available through the end of February, and decisions are usually made around April. It's intended for students who have already at least somewhat committed to pre-med, because we expect that they've taken already some of their prerequisite courses before they enroll in the BaccMD. Students who are considering a major change, or they started out in psychology, and then they're moving on to pre-med, are absolutely welcome to apply. And I know that through the robust pre- health advising that's available at Worcester State, they would already be getting advice of which courses they would need to take before they got started.

Jennifer Berryman

Terrific, Is there anything else that either of you would like these students to know?

Tracy Kedian

If you are interested in a career in the health professions, and especially if Massachusetts is your home, and you'd like to continue with that, please reach out to us, because this for you.

Yeah, and I think just following that up with it's, it's for those who don't think it's for you, either, I mean, so many students are like, Well, I've never had this, or I'm not good enough, or I don't know what to do.

Jeffry Nichols

It's a program that's like is going to guide you. Diego and Isabella expressed that as well, this idea that I didn't have these opportunities, and to know that those opportunities are available just as is amazing.

Jennifer Berryman

It's really a gem of a program. If you are intrigued and you want to learn more, we will include a link about the BaccMD program at UMass Chan Medical School, and we'll also include the application in our show notes.

If you like the *Voices of UMass Chan*, head over to our website, umassmed.edu/voices for more of our episodes. I'm Jennifer Berryman, thanks for listening