

Transcript for Accelerated MD program podcast – to publish on Nov. 15

Music

Voice over artist

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

Jennifer Berryman

Hi everyone. Thank you for listening. I'm Jennifer Berryman, the vice chancellor for communications at UMass Chan Medical School. In 2022, The T.H. Chan School of Medicine here at UMass Chan unveiled a new curriculum for all medical students. It's called Vista. And intriguingly, it offers for the first time an accelerated three-year medical degree. To better understand the new curriculum and that three-year MD, we welcome two guests today. Mark Vining is an associate professor of pediatrics. And Trish Seymour is associate professor of family medicine & community health as well as assistant dean for clinical curriculum. Thanks so much for joining us.

Trish Seymour

Thanks so much for having us.

Mark Vining

It's good to be here.

Jennifer Berryman

Great. So, Trish, let's start with you tell us about Vista.

Trish Seymour

Vista has been a work in progress for the last four, maybe five years, when some of that conceptual work started. And we matriculated our first class, the Class of 2026. Not this past August, but the prior August. And so, we have two classes engaged in the new curriculum. And that is the discovery phase. The first 18 months of the Vista curriculum are called the discovery phase. The second phase is the exploration phase. People know this as the sort of time period in which core clerkships happen. The exploration phase is that core curriculum. And then the horizons phase is what we used to call the advanced studies phase. This is a 14-month period of time, which is very customized to the learner's career goals and the student's area of interest and which residencies they want to apply to. So, it's three phases in this new curriculum. And the most well built out at this point in time is the discovery phase. And this is different from our prior curriculum, the link curriculum, in that is a single pass block based integrated curriculum. And so, what that means in that is that our students learn the normal anatomy, normal physiology, normal pharmacology, and then they also learned the abnormal. So, pathophysiology, disease states. In our old curriculum, those were separated. So, the first pass was all the normals. And the second pass was all the pathology. And now that's combined. And that was based on student feedback, some trends in medical education, more widely. And that's new. For us. It's also more integrated in that everything the learners are doing within the block. So, their clinical skills training, what they're learning about health systems science, anatomy is part of the blocks not carved out as a separate course. And so that

integration is also pretty new for us. That concept around integration carries through to the second and third stages of the curriculum to the exploration horizons.

Jennifer Berryman

And so, everything you just talked about, that's all part of the discovery or that foundational phase that happens in the first 18 months.

Trish Seymour

The block based single pass curriculum, that is all part of the discovery phase. The new interest in integration and the more holistic approach to teaching medical education that persists through all the phases of the new curriculum.

Jennifer Berryman

The other thing that as I understand it is different about Vista is that medical students are able to select one of seven specific pathways or sort of focus or concentration areas, and these range from clinical care or education to entrepreneurship, population health or structural inequity, advocacy and justice. Why the requirement to integrate a focus area for physicians?

Trish Seymour

This was something that our student design team really called for. So, we've always had a longitudinal or capstone project curriculum at UMass Chan. And we found that there were themes in what students were selecting as their longitudinal projects. And there was there was a call for that to be built out a little bit more in a structured fashion. We also looked at what other medical schools were doing and most offered pathway programs. Our elective pathway programs were incredibly popular, and we felt that that was something that should be open to all students. And so, the pathways program was built.

Jennifer Berryman

Very interesting. And just I guess, a point of clarification, because there are so many options now for our medical students. So, for students who are accepted into one of our regional campus tracks, that would be [the PURCH track](#) out in Springfield at UMass Chan Bay-State. And starting this coming year, the [UMass Chan-Lahey campus](#) will have its first cohort of students that will have a special leadership and health and health system science track. They would be part of that track. And they would not choose one of these seven pathways, but these are for the majority of students.

Trish Seymour

The seven pathways that you described are for the Worcester students. But PURCH is a pathway and Lead@Lahey is a pathway. The curriculum for those pathways are delivered at the regional campuses. So, in Burlington, and out in Springfield.

Jennifer Berryman

right. And so, Vista is still the name of the curriculum for all medical students regardless of your pathway. It does allow Vista a handful of first-year medical students to apply for as we mentioned, a three-year instead of four-

year three-year accelerated curriculum that you would apply after they've been accepted into UMass Chan and the first cohort of these accelerated MD or aMD students started back in January 2023, as I understand it. So, Dr. Vining, this three-year MD, it's really not for everybody. So, can you just talk a little bit about how it differs and who might be best who it might be best suited for?

Mark Vining

Absolutely, thank you for the opportunity. This is a great collaboration between the medical school or undergraduate medical education and the residency programs here at UMass Chan. It's designed to be attractive to students who are pretty sure they want a career in generalist medicine, like primary care. Currently, it's only available for students interested in family medicine, internal medicine and pediatrics. So, it's an opportunity for people who know they want to pursue careers in those specialties and are willing to be part of UMass Chan's residency program. So, they're making a six-year commitment, not a three- or four-year commitment when they applied to this program. I'd explain it to students as it's like a pipeline. If you get accepted, you're integrated into the residency program of your choice that accepts you. You start seeing patients and having clinical experiences right in the first year on the site where you will eventually be a resident here at UMass Cham.

Jennifer Berryman

Thank you, Dr. Vining. Let's pause for just a second. We recently spoke with two medical students here at UMass Chan who are in the first cohort of the accelerated MD track. Let's hear from them about what their experience has been like so far.

Elena Tang

Hi, my name is Elena. I'm a second-year medical student. I think the program is like a secret hidden gem. We've learned so much throughout the process. I think a big factor was that if I wanted to do internal medicine, anyway, might as well save a year of time and also tuition. And because the program offered, you know internal medicine or family medicine, pediatrics, we get a lot of clinical practice. Over the summer, we had to do our family medicine clerkship early. But before the clerkship, we had a boot camp where we got to learn a bunch of different skills, including stuff that our other classmates haven't even learned yet such as a gynecology exam. I talked to a few first years and a lot of them say like the program seems interesting. And they know they want to do primary care anyway. So, if I hear that I immediately tell them all the pros.

Mia Lai

Hi, my name is Mia Lai. And I'm a second-year medical student. I had a good amount of patient interaction before and I worked at different clinical settings when I was a physical therapist, so I felt like I had a good understanding of the health care system in the U.S. And also, the time and the tuition saved for this program is definitely an attraction for me. I have just really been surprised by the amount of resources UMass Chan has put on us. We have a lot one to two sessions that our classmates don't usually get. Now, if I know like an MS1 is interested in either internal medicine, family medicine or pediatrics, I think it's definitely worth applying for.

Jennifer Berryman

What was the motivation behind developing a three-year MD program?

Trish Seymour

Vista is all about customization. You've heard about the Pathways Program; you've heard about minimizing some of the core curriculum and really concentrating on career driven specialty specific curriculum in the horizon space. And we know that about 20 percent of our learners don't graduate on time. They do their fifth year of medical school. We also know that there are some learners who feel like things are moving a little slowly that are ready for more. And so that was part of part of the vision. The second piece is really about the expense of medical school. So medical school is expensive. For those learners who are ready for the accelerated experience, it's an expense that's not necessary, necessarily. And we got involved and learned from programs that already had accelerated pathways and saw how successful that was and the positive feedback that learners and graduates were giving. And we saw the amount of money that those students were able to save by participating in a program like this. And it's, it's not for everybody, but there is a subset of learners who know what they want to do when they arrive at medical school that are ready to put in the extra time and work. And as a result, can save money and have an experience that's more customized to their aptitude and their interests.

Jennifer Berryman

Thank you for that. That's interesting. And so, Dr. Vining, how does the three-year program differ structurally from the four-year program? You so your initial question is sort of like how are you squishing all that into four or three years? So how is it structured differently for students in the accelerated program?

Mark Vining

Exactly what are nuts and bolts? Right? Well, one of the beauties of this program is that it isn't a parallel curriculum that is different from the Vista curriculum that the four-year counterparts for these students are taking. They do exactly the same Vista curriculum as everybody else, plus some additional curricular components. The reason that is important is if for any reason, a student changes his or her mind, either in specialty or ability to commit to a residency program here at UMass Chan, they can simply decelerate back into the four-year program that they've already been accepted into. They don't lose any opportunity to do that, which hopefully will attract more people to consider it. What is extra is, in the first year, the spring of the first year, there's extra clinical time, in addition to the early clinical learning that is already part of VISTA extra clinical time in the home residency program of the students' choices. In addition to that there are didactic components for the entire cohort focusing on in the first year, organ systems that will be covered in the second year, but they have not yet been exposed to in the first-year curriculum. And the reason those are important is because the crux of the program is the summer between the first- and second year, these aMD students complete their family medicine clerkship. So, they do it a big, big chunk of what everyone else was doing an exploration phase during the third year they do in the summer between their first and second year. They need to be prepared to see patients with various conditions. And we have the course leaders of the second-year courses give them sort of primer lectures and cases to study to prepare them for a family medicine clerkship with the conditions that they will likely encounter in that outpatient experience. So that is additional programming they get in the spring, and in the fall of their second year. Similarly, they will have extra clinical time in their home residency program to really integrate them into where they will be eventual residents, and other didactic sessions, but the cohort as a whole takes that tries to incorporate parts of the VISTA curriculum that they will not get in a fourth-year, because they aren't having a fourth-year. Some of the wellness categories, some of the health system science, QI, some of that is integrated into Vista and some of it is integrated into Vista in the fourth year. So, we're

making an effort to make sure they don't miss out on any key parts of medical education, that they won't have exposure to it in the fourth year. And then their exploration phase or their clerkship phases are pretty much the same as their four-year counterparts. They just do it in a specific order. But it's really the same experience that makes.

Jennifer Berryman

A lot of sense. Thank you for that. You're now with the second group, the aMD students. Any drawbacks that have come up?

Mark Vining

Well, we're in the application phase right now for the second cohort. So, they haven't been selected yet. So, we still only have the first cohort, but it has been going extremely well. Their feedback has been extraordinary. They have been completing the aMD components as well as the rest of Vista curriculum with great success.

Jennifer Berryman

For either Dr. Seymour or Dr. Vining. What is it that you would want future applicants, future physicians who might be interested in this aMD program to know?

Mark Vining

Well, I think it takes a special person to know what specialty they're interested in, you know, when they walk in the door of medical school. Certainly, many people don't know which is fine. But for those that do, it really gives an opportunity to get you where you want to be in a streamlined fashion. So, for people, especially students who have had other careers or other experiences prior to medical school, that really helped them figure out where they want to be in medical school as a step in that direction to that ultimate career goal, if you they know what that is, this is, you know, this is designed for them.

Trish Seymour

And I think the only thing I'd add to that is the program has been built for lots of easy off ramps too. So, we also don't want people who think that they've got the work ethic for this program, right now they feel pretty confident they know their career pathway. We don't want them to feel too locked in because things change, we recognize that and, and I think we've been pretty thoughtful about building a program where you weren't locked in. It's easy to transition back to the regular curriculum at multiple plot points along the way. And so, we are looking for a certain type of learner, but we also recognize that people evolve in medical school and minds change all the time. And so, I don't want people to be too fearful of commitment either.

Jennifer Berryman

Really important point. And just to restate the process piece, the first step is to apply and to get accepted to the T.H. Chan School of Medicine. And then that secondary application for the aMD program comes after you have been admitted. Dr. Vining you mentioned this is a partnership between graduate medical education and undergraduate medical education. So, if I'm a student doing the three-year accelerated MD, Do I still participate in that joyous day Match Day that all medical students experience?

Mark Vining

Indeed, you do. The students in the aMD program do participate in the Match. What I've been telling the people that are applying, you're not just applying to this three-year program. I don't want you to be thinking about what medical school is going to be like. What you're doing as a first-year medical student is applying for residency. Indeed, it's up to the residency programs whom they accept. I'm not accepting you into the program. You're already in the medical school. I'm facilitating you to be interviewed by a residency program. So, you are interviewed by them, they make the decision, and then you have a directed pathway into their program. So, you do participate in the Match a year earlier than your four-year cohorts. But it's a little bit less dramatic because you sort of know the answer already.

Jennifer Berryman

Very interesting. Well, Dr. Mark Vining and Dr. Trish Seymour, thank you so much for joining us. Really interesting program.

Trish Seymour

Thanks, Jennifer for your interest. We're really excited about it too. Thank you.

Jennifer Berryman

If you like the *Voices of UMass Chan*, please share it on your social media channels and subscribe so you don't miss an episode. You can also listen this year to episodes on UMass Chan's YouTube channel. If you have an idea for a future episode, we'd love to know email us at UMassChanCommunications@umassmed.edu.

MUSIC

Voice over artist

Follow us at UMass Chan on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn. On YouTube find this at UMass Chan Medical School.m