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## Professional Schools Seek Degrees of Cooperation

Demand for cross-disciplinary training leads law, medical, and other programs to combine forces

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BALTIMORE

FROM HER WINDOW in the dean's office at the University of Maryland School of Law, Karen H. Rothenberg has a view that clinched her decision to take the job. It's not rolling hills and church steeples. What caught her eye on this compact, downtown campus were dozens of students swarming in and out of red-brick buildings housing the schools of medicine, nursing, social work, pharmacy, and dentistry.

To a bioethicist with one foot in law and the other in medicine, this beehive of activity seemed like a perfect setting for cross-pollination.

"I saw an opportunity to, in one place, bring together all of the professions to address complicated social issues in an interdisciplinary way," Ms. Rothenberg says. "The law school could be the force to bring them all together."

Maryland now offers physicians a chance to earn law degrees, social workers an opportunity to study business, and students training to be dentists, nurses, or social workers a way to tackle the needs of the elderly together. The institution is not alone. Spurred in part by years of declining applications through the late 1990s, as well as escalating costs, professional schools that have historically prided themselves on their independence are increasingly willing to form collaborative degree programs with others, and to cater to working professionals interested in crossover degrees.

While comparative data are hard to come by, experts say the number of combined degree programs has soared over the past decade. The nation's 125 accredited medical schools, for example, now offer more than 80 such programs in league with other professional schools.

Despite the intra-institutional friction the programs sometimes create, their proponents say they offer students distinct advantages. "In order to be successful today, you have to be cross-trained," says David E. Van Zandt, dean of Northwestern University's School of Law, which, along with the business school, offers a three-year J.D./M.B.A. program. "Today's work force is team-oriented. A lawyer who doesn't understand the business his client is in, or the businessman who doesn't understand his industry's legal environment, is in a dangerous situation."

### AN ALPHABET SOUP OF DEGREES

Institutions are offering an alphabet soup of joint degrees, among them M.D./M.B.A., M.D./J.D., Pharm.D./M.B.A., even M.S.W./J.D.—a master's of social work and a law degree.

The creation and growth of such programs has been governed largely by the vagaries of supply and demand. Business

### 3 Joint Programs

Professional schools at several institutions are working together in innovative ways.

#### Carolina Center for Genome Sciences

**INSTITUTION:** University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

**PURPOSE:** Pools the expertise of faculty members from a half-dozen professional schools in a \$2.15-million project that emphasizes both research and professional training.

**TOPICS COVERED:** The center draws on professors of dentistry, medicine, nursing, pharmacy, and public health, as well as information and library science and law. In addition to performing research, they will teach students enrolled in a new minor in human genetics, and train medical residents in genetics.

**THE TAKE:** "We have an obligation to train the next generations of medical researchers to fulfill the promise of this field, and our campuswide collaboration will ensure that these budding researchers have the breadth of knowledge that encourages discovery," says Terry Magnuson, who heads the medical school's genetics department.

#### Physician-Engineer Training Program

**INSTITUTION:** Case Western Reserve University

**PURPOSE:** Prepares graduate students to design medical tools, using engineering skills to solve medical problems. Students earn both a medical degree and a doctorate in biomedical engineering.

**TOPICS COVERED:** The seven-year program includes the development of artificial organs, implantable prosthetics, and medical-imaging devices that will allow a physician to view a tumor without surgery. During the first two years, students take courses at the medical school, perform research at a hospital or lab, and enroll in a few graduate courses. They complete the Ph.D. portion in the third, fourth, and fifth years, and finish their medical training in the last two years.

**THE TAKE:** "As an engineer, you can come up with all kinds of fancy devices that work beautifully in the lab, but they may not be practical for patients," says Patrick E. Crago, chairman of the biomedical-engineering department.

#### Joint Social Work/Law Program

**INSTITUTION:** Loyola University Chicago

**PURPOSE:** Offers specialized skills for students who want to become family lawyers or legal advocates for clients such as battered women, troubled adolescents, or substance abusers. Students earn both a J.D. and a master's degree in social work.

**TOPICS COVERED:** The program, which allows students to complete both degrees in about five years, includes family dynamics, how to help clients with emotional and mental-health needs, and how to counsel couples. Students can tailor their courses to their area of interest—working in mental health, school social work, child welfare, or elderly services, for instance.

**THE TAKE:** "Students learn how to assess interpersonal interactions. They can see a family and have a better sense of how to engage or approach them," says Marta Lundy, an associate professor of social work. "They can also identify, for instance, whether someone is severely depressed and needs more than just legal resources."

SOURCE: CHRONICLE REPORTING

schools, for example, are now "looking to other disciplines to make up for a Ph.D. shortage," says Robert L. Taylor, dean of the University of Louisville's College of Business and Public Administration. Business faculty members with non-business-related Ph.D.'s, naturally enough, are often advocates for cross-disciplinary programs with other professional schools.

Business-faculty members aren't the only people who have been in short supply in professional schools in recent years. During the late 1990s, applications at many professional schools slid as students took advantage of the strong economy and headed straight to the work force. Medicine, nursing, pharmacy, law, social work, business, and engineering schools all saw

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declines. At the same time, universities faced more competition from for-profit and on-line degree programs.

Finding a niche became more important than ever, and institutions began reaching out to new students. In 1998, the University of Tennessee's College of Business Administration started an executive-M.B.A. program for physicians. As the growth of managed care foisted new administrative burdens on physicians, other business schools jumped at the opportunity to offer the chance to earn M.D.'s and M.B.A.'s at the same time. The University of California at Irvine's five-year program, begun in 1997, starts with three years of medical school and a summer of clinical training, followed by a year of M.B.A. work. In the summer after their fourth year, students return to the clinic for about six months, followed by two more quarters of M.B.A. studies.

Northwestern's Small Business Opportunity Clinic offers students enrolled in a joint law-and-business program a chance to work in teams to provide legal and business advice to aspiring entrepreneurs and small businesses.

Schools of social work, too, have linked up with a variety of other programs, says Nancy Randolph, director of accreditation for the Council on Social Work Education. Law schools are the most common partners, but many social-work students opt to study business. Such a combination can give them an edge in a tight job market, and improve their chances of landing a job that will pay enough to make a dent in their student loans. "If you're running a social-services agency, supervising other people or setting up a private practice in psychotherapy, there are lots of opportunities to use an M.B.A. along with your social-work skills," Ms. Randolph says. "It can be a nice marriage."

#### COMMON PROBLEMS

Law and medicine programs have been combined for years, but recent scientific advances have heightened the need for such partnerships. Ms. Rothenberg, who taught law and medicine at Maryland for nearly two decades before becoming dean last year, founded the university's Law and Health Care Program in 1987 to take on complex issues in which health care and law intersect.

A good example is her current field of study—the legal, social, and ethical implications of genetics research. Students in Maryland's pioneering program are trained to make informed decisions about increasingly common problems:

Can an employer refuse to hire someone because genetics tests reveal that he is predisposed to diabetes? Should parents inform school officials that their child is HIV-positive, and must schools keep such information confidential?

The program's acting director, Diane E. Hoffman, has examined whether physicians discriminate against women by taking their reports of pain less seriously than those of men.

Maryland encourages students to form interdisciplinary groups to study issues like the civil rights of mentally retarded people and the impact of substance abuse



Karen H. Rothenberg, Maryland's law dean, says she saw an opportunity to "bring together all of the professions."

on families. "When students work in cross-disciplinary teams, they realize that they're already dependent on other professional students, the way they will be dependent on other professionals in their careers," says Joann A. Boughman, a former vice president for academic affairs, who is now executive vice president of the American Society of Human Genetics.

When physicians grumble about working alongside lawyers, she says, "I tell them, when you get sued for malpractice, do you really want a physician colleague defending you, or do you want a lawyer? When you put it in the right context, they sit up and take notice."

Despite the popularity of such offerings, cross-disciplinary programs carry their

own set of challenges. Turf battles can break out over who controls the budget, who sets the agenda, and who gets top billing if the results are published.

The logistics of offering joint programs can also be daunting, especially if the schools follow different schedules and have different degree requirements and grading systems. Not to mention schools that try to link up that are hundreds of miles apart.

What's more, medical students aren't always thrilled at the prospect of being taught by lawyers, and law-school faculty members don't always agree with their medical-school colleagues on such touchy issues as medical malpractice.

But those differences can be smoothed

over by the ever growing number of faculty members with dual appointments, like Ms. Rothenberg. "Lawyers have preconceived notions about doctors, and doctors about lawyers," Ms. Rothenberg says. "We're trying to break down those barriers."

Indeed, most people find that a little crossbreeding is a healthy thing. "Law professors are frequently criticized for being isolated in their corner of the campus and not participating in the institution as a whole," says Carl C. Monk, executive director of the Association of American Law Schools. "There are real benefits to having law faculty teaching in the business school and physicians teaching in the law school. A client may well have issues that require some knowledge of another discipline—a social worker, for instance, if the case involves child abuse."

While the benefits to students may be obvious, it's not always clear to faculty members how such interdisciplinary work will advance their careers. The big question for younger scholars is whether their work will be recognized and appreciated by the tenure-and-promotion committees.

In fact, cross-disciplinary work often isn't valued as much as highly specialized scholarship might be. "A lot of people who would like to take part in these programs are waiting to see, 'Am I going to be rewarded for this?'" says Louisville's Mr. Taylor. "Academe is a tradition-bound institution, and we need to put our money where our mouth is and make sure we're rewarding people for this kind of interdisciplinary work."

#### THINKING 'ROBUSTLY'

Those who have already earned degrees in multiple disciplines see such cross-training enhance their careers and their marketability. Take Wiley W. Souba, chairman of surgery at Pennsylvania State University's College of Medicine, who has both an M.D. and an M.B.A. When he hits the lecture circuit, he's just as likely to be talking about leadership and marketing as he is about his specialty, surgical oncology.

Dr. Souba earned an executive M.B.A. from Boston University three years ago. He had become interested in leadership before getting the business degree, he says, but "I never could have thought so robustly about these issues without the business training."

Now, when he talks to medical residents and faculty members about what it means to be a strong leader, he draws on not only his experience as a medical administrator but also his M.B.A. studies.

"True leaders are visible, and they get out and circulate among the troops," he says. "They're doers—they don't just set policies and write memos."

What about the argument that academic medicine is becoming too focused on the bottom line, often to the detriment of patients? Dr. Souba shares those concerns but says physicians can't afford to view M.B.A. types as the enemy. "We need the rigors of business in order to remain competitive and make a profit so we can continue serving our patients." Because of his business training, he says, "I can sit at the table with people who are experts at finance and hold my own."



Penn State's Wiley W. Souba, who recently earned an M.B.A., sees cross-training as the future of medicine.

JIM GRAHAM, OSI, FOR THE CHRONICLE