

Pritzker Class Size: A Q&A With Dr. Holly Humphrey *Dean for Medical Education*



The Fundamental Principles for Medical Education at the University of Chicago **All Teaching by University Faculty** **A Well-Resourced Curriculum** **A Well-Resourced Student Body**

In response to the demands of a new curriculum with its emphasis on mentorship and a personalized approach to education, the school will reduce its average class size to 88 per year by the fall of 2009. This will enable the medical school to devote additional resources and faculty time to each student as a way to sustain excellence in a dynamically changing health care environment.

What is your goal in reducing the class size?

In August 2009, the Pritzker School of Medicine will transform its curriculum. "The Pritzker Initiative: A Curriculum for the 21st Century" will increase student-faculty interactions, create opportunities for discovery, reduce the number of large lecture classes and replace them with small-group, hands-on learning under the direct mentorship of renowned faculty physicians, researchers, and clinical educators. All students at Pritzker will complete a significant project in research, community service, or other areas of interest under the close supervision of our faculty. By reducing the class size, the medical school will increase student-faculty interactions, devote additional educational resources and financial support to each student, renew our emphasis on scholarship and discovery, and restore some of the personal bonds in modern medical education that are often lost because of pressures on faculty time.

What are the implications on the school's ability to provide financial aid?

About 80% of our students get some sort of support, including merit and need-based aid. That has been increasing steadily. We will still have the same amount of funding for scholarships, but fewer matriculants, so the average amount of scholarship support will significantly increase. Average debt for our graduates should similarly decrease significantly.

How will the reduction affect diversity at the Pritzker School of Medicine?

More than 20% of the 2007 matriculants were from minority backgrounds historically underrepresented in medicine. Because of the strength of our pipeline programs and our emphasis on health care disparities in both research and education, we are both committed and confident that we will continue to attract and matriculate a class that is exceptionally diverse in all respects (including geographic origin, age, undergraduate and graduate college, and field of study, among others).

How will the change in class size affect the dynamic of the curriculum?

A smaller class size will give each student an opportunity for greater involvement in his or her learning experience. Students will participate in increased small group learning and more interactive forms of education such as journal clubs and case studies. The small group experience will require a heavier commitment on the part of our faculty, particularly for the Scholarship and Discovery component of the curriculum. With a stronger faculty to student ratio, faculty members will have the opportunity to be even more active and engaged in each student's learning experience.

How will this affect Pritzker's performance in the Match?

We already do extraordinarily well in the Match. The leading residency programs seek our graduates. We expect this will, if anything, improve the appeal our graduates will have to the most competitive residency programs.

Will the criteria being used for the admissions process change?

The Committee on Admissions will continue to perform an individual, holistic review of each application received, paying special attention to the unique qualities and interests which are outlined in the Pritzker Mission Statement: ***"At the University of Chicago, in an atmosphere of interdisciplinary scholarship and discovery, the Pritzker School of Medicine is dedicated to inspiring diverse students of exceptional promise to become leaders and innovators in science and medicine for the betterment of humanity."***

