Continuing Medical Education is among best in class nationally

For the second time in a row, the University School of Medicine-Palm Beach, Richmond Continuing Medical Education has accomplished two significant achievements.

The Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), a national agency based in Chicago, has accredited the program for the maximum six years instead of the usual four and awarded accreditation "with commendation."

Of the roughly 200 organizations accredited across the country, only 6 to 8 percent receive accreditation with commendation.

The School of Medicine is the only such program in the state to have its continuing medical education program accredited for six years.

"It's wonderful to have the recognition," said Terri J. Blackman, assistant dean for Continuing Medical Education and Faculty Development. "This achievement recognizes that the work we are doing is of high quality." The difference between a four-year and a six-year accreditation and receiving or not receiving commendation involves two different compliance levels. The USCOMED-STEP CHE Omnibus program met "must have" criteria that everyone must meet but also excelled at seven of nine "stretch goals."

The additional criteria the extent to which a CHE organization is integrated into its sponsoring institutions to achieve systemic change and improvements in quality of patient care.

"We are very proud of our program," Blackman said. "It's a good thing, but if you're able to engage the wide range of stakeholders who have an interest in continuing medical education, you enhance your program." Blackman said, "In other words, our expertise, our content is shared with the community. This award is a recognition of the work we are doing in this area." Mental Health, representatives from August and Richland hospitals, people in quality, and the breadth of knowledge from Palmate Health. We've been able to demonstrate engagement with non-physicians and outreach, and that's why we received that recognition.

The Continuing Medical Education Organization provides strong value to the University School of Medicine and Palmate Health Richland.

"We help provide quality medical performances," Blackman said. "We assist physicians in their quest for lifelong learning, and we assist physicians in their ability to better serve our patients."

Receiving accreditation for six years is not only an honor but also serves the University money. "The accreditation process takes over a year and requires a substantial amount of time and work," Blackman said. "But by being awarded two extra years, we will only have to go through the accreditation process twice every six years, unlike most schools, with four-year accumulations, who will go through the process three times."

Blackman credited the continuing medical education staff for making such achievements possible. Current staff members include Elizabeth S. Hopp, administrative assistant; Lauren Morris, director of Training and Development; Donna K. Ray, director of Faculty Development; Cheryl H. Slayton, administrative assistant; Lauren Venuto, program coordinator; and Nancy L. Williams, administrative coordinator.

"This award is specific to the accreditation process," Blackman said. "It looks at the quality of the educational program." In a letter announcing the accreditation, the chief executive of ACCME wrote: "The ACCME congratulates you and commends your organization for not only meeting ACCME's accreditation requirements, but for demonstrating that your organization is learning from accrual and change, a change that is part of a system for quality improvement."

"It's nice to have someone outside—on a national level—take a really long, hard look at us and say we're doing a great job," Blackman said.

Going with the flow

Scientists study climate and sea level change effects on major river

In our news

Imagine turning on the faucet and pouring yourself a tall, cool glass ... of saltwater.

That's what happened in 2011 when drought conditions turned the Pee Dee River's normal flow of freshwater into a trickle. The reduced river flow allowed Atlantic Ocean waves to move upstream and into municipal intake pipes.

Climate change, rising sea levels, and increasing demand for freshwater could make that unwanted salty intrusion a more frequent scenario in the future. That's why a new study by Carolina scientists will be important for municipal water managers who rely on the Pee Dee River for drinking water.

"That's not an issue that can be described by wet and dry years, but can be explained by changes that are occurring more slowly," said Susan Truluck, a biology associate professor at Carolina who is part of a team of researchers looking at the effects of climate change on the Pee Dee River basin, which feeds into Winyah Bay on the South Carolina coast. "We want to give water planners the ability to change their planning models to reflect higher saltwater intrusion, which can cause significant problems downstream," said Kristen Dow, a geography associate professor and co-principal investigator on the study. "What is a coastal water manager to do?"

They need to make informed decisions, but climate modeling isn't quite up to the task; neither is water modeling," Dow said.

For coastal towns that depend on adequate river flow for freshwater, moving intake pipes farther upstream to avoid saltwater intrusion from the ocean in a possible but very unlikely solution. With a rapidly changing and water-scarce world, water managers could potentially lose water intake in place and simply cut them off when conditions point to backwash or saltwater intrusion in the river.

"What we especially want from a climate model is a forecast of the persistence of dry periods, and the models are not quite able to provide that," said Greg Carbon, a geography associate professor and co-principal investigator. "There is uncertainty with each step, and the best we can do for now is to offer a range of possible scenarios."

Carbon, Dow, and Truluck hope to make incremental improvements in water flow models for the Pee Dee River and bring along the information to municipal decision makers.

"This is one small piece of a larger issue," Truluck said. "There are implications for population growth in coastal areas and the growing demand for freshwater in areas that are hard pressed to supply it under certain conditions."

Reorganization puts campus infrastructure under new VP, aligns finance and planning

President Harris Pastides has recognized a number of offices related to the campus physical infrastructure under a new vice president position.

"We've taken the physical infrastructure of the campus and put it under a single vice president, and the CPO position has been combined with the strategic planning function," Moore said. "We've also had a good link between facilities and planning. Our reorganization, by aligning these two functions, makes that connection stronger."

"It's particularly important now given where we are financially, not just the world but especially in South Carolina. We have to be more careful than ever with laying out very well thought out strategic plans and making every dollar go as far as it can," Moore said.

Before the reorganization, these offices reported to the University's chief financial officer (CFO) Rick Kelly until his July retirement.

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