

## Curriculum Inventory Newsletter May 2019

### Medical School Curriculum Schematics - Visually Representing the Student Experience

The AAMC Curriculum Inventory (CI) is made up of many data points. From instructional methods to learning objectives, event titles to course descriptions, the list of data points can be lengthy. When trying to communicate what a curriculum entails, or broadly what a student's experience will be, having a visual representation of the curricular content and structure can be helpful.

The AAMC CI has a webpage where you can [review medical schools' curricular schematics](#) - these are organized by U.S. MD schools, Canadian MD schools, and U.S. DO schools. In reviewing these visual representations of schools' curricula, I found some themes. I'm highlighting some specific programs below as representative of a theme; I saw many great examples of visual representations in my review.

- 1. Organizing curricula by calendar.** Some schools are able to show the entire four year program by time in an easy-to-interpret graphical representation, like [Central Michigan University College of Medicine](#). Another example is [Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University](#) who collapses their curriculum so that the user can choose how deeply to dive into a particular piece of the curriculum, eventually landing at a week-by-week calendar.
- 2. Using color to highlight longitudinal programs.** [Chicago Medical School at Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine & Science](#) uses color to represent longitudinal experiences (e.g., their Essentials of Clinical Reasoning curriculum) for students that cross over other course experiences (e.g., musculoskeletal system). [Cooper Medical School of Rowan University](#) also uses color to show longitudinal experiences across time (e.g., selectives), and allows the user to click on individual courses and curriculum to see a more detailed description.
- 3. Balancing visual and descriptive information.** It can be tricky deciding how much text is enough (or too much) to explain a curriculum to a relative novice (e.g., an applicant). The same could be said for balancing visual graphics. [Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons](#) balances the two approaches with a graphical representation to begin, and descriptions underneath which the user can choose to click on to see more detail. [George Washington School of Medicine & Health Sciences](#) begins with a description of their structure and schedule, then provides a graphical representation followed by further description of specific curricular experiences. This example also shows how to juxtapose a previous and newer curricular structure.
- 4. Distilling the curricular experience to one page.** Communicating the curricular experience in a single page can be very challenging. Here are some examples we can look to: [University of Massachusetts Medical School](#) uses acronyms, asterisks and symbols to highlight pieces of the curriculum (e.g., simulations, interprofessional experiences). [University of Nevada Las Vegas](#) uses color and blocks time by curricular requirement (e.g., research bench or community experience). [University of North Carolina School of Medicine Chapel Hill](#) differentiates the curricular experience by phase: foundational phase, application phase, individualization phase, and calls out transitions between phases.

With these examples and others, we see schools calling out information that is not only understandable for applicants, but is also very relevant for students: when are winter and summer breaks, and when are the dedicated study periods!

**5. Innovative approaches.** In addition to themes, I wanted to share some interesting approaches.

[Penn State College of Medicine](#) begins with an interactive visual map that allows the user to click on individual pieces and jump to that section of the description. They also provide a printer-friendly version.

[Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University](#) embeds their curriculum threads in a visual arc which begins at the start of medical school, and ends with students as resident-ready.

[The University of Texas at Austin Dell Medical School](#) uses their curriculum description to highlight the brand name of their curriculum, the Leading EDGE, and reinforces that brand with their descriptions.

[Wright State University Boonshoft School of Medicine](#) uses a word cloud to showcase one of the facets of the curriculum experience that matters most to students and applicants: what the students think about it. Words like "enjoyable," "supportive," and "fun" are highlighted.

In my review of curriculum visual schematics, I see a lot of emerging common themes and new ideas. Even though applicants, students, and faculty are likely the primary audiences for these visual schematics, we as curriculum leaders and medical educators can also use these to learn more about how our colleagues are evolving their programs. This is a time of curriculum renewal, and what better way to succinctly summarize a curriculum change than with a visual. I hope this list of visual schematics can be useful to you as you consider how to evolve and describe your curriculum.

If you would like your school added to [this list](#), or have an updated curriculum visual schematic to share, please let us know at [ci@aamc.org](mailto:ci@aamc.org).

Onward!

Angela D. Blood  
Director, Curricular Resources  
[www.aamc.org/cir](http://www.aamc.org/cir)