

Institutional Strategic Plan / Annual Report Update 2024 Midwest College of Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine (MCAHM)

Introduction

The U.S. Department of Education removed the temporary educational accommodations associated with the COVID-19 pandemic in October 2023. In planning for this change, MCAHM has received approval from NC-SARA and the Accrediting Commission for Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine to offer distance education.

Lecture courses continue to be offered online through Zoom and the College the Padlet platforms—a sample of the Padlet platform for course organization. A sample of the LMS is at

<https://padlet.com/mcompresident/fw4m77s7gc3nypbx>.

The College continues to conduct longitudinal studies of assessment results as part of the online course delivery and compare in-person and online assessment results. No red flags indicate that online courses' performance results are lower than those of in-person classes. An essential aspect of online learning is creating a community of learners at a distance.

Dr. William Dunbar, College President, continues working with the college leadership and faculty to refine in-person and online courses.

The current economy's uncertainty and load deferment change have led to lower enrollment rates. The College has adjusted the budget and automated many labor-intensive administrative aspects of tracking student clinic treatments and graduation clinical audits. In addition, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Aetna, and United Healthcare have moved Acupuncture to in-network status for patient reimbursement. Medicare Advantage plans are now covering Acupuncture. These monumental changes will result in additional new student interest. In 2024, the College has implemented financial changes that will dramatically reduce costs without affecting the educational component of the programs. The College's cohort default rate has dropped from 2.1% to 0%, even though COVID deferments have been lifted.

An opportunity has arisen from the Joint Commission for the Accreditation of Hospitals' approval of Acupuncture to replace opioid pain medication. United Healthcare, Aetna, and Blue Cross have moved Acupuncture to in-network status, and Medicare Advantage plans are paying for Acupuncture. These changes will increase the number of opportunities for college graduates.

In summary, MCAHM has consistently sought to improve education and educational delivery to benefit the students directly. Many members of the College leadership are members or committee chairpersons at the Council of Colleges of Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine. The commitment to excellence in Chinese medical education has enabled the College to endure and thrive.

I. School Information Name of School: Midwest College of Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine(MCAHM, College)

II. Institutional Plan Elements

A. Mission Describe your school's mission and vision, which identifies its purpose and its core values.

Mission (from current Catalog)

It is MCAHM's mission to provide an education that is rooted in the historical context and teachings of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and combine it with modern clinical applications to create a practitioner of Acupuncture or Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine that embraces the spirit of "ancient medicine for modern times".

Purpose

The combination of Eastern and Western science, together with an appreciation of the natural healing philosophies of Asia, leads to the development of the qualities that are the "Heart of Chinese Medicine". With this foundation, graduates will become true practitioners of Acupuncture and Herbal healing. The subtle balance of clinical science and compassion is the key to a successful practice.

The Acupuncture Program is modeled on the modern eight-principle style taught at TCM Universities in China. Combined with the biomedicine courses, it prepares graduates to practice Classic Chinese Medicine using Acupuncture, moxibustion, and other accessory modalities. The curriculum in the Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine program includes a specific course of study in areas of food and herb therapy that are fundamental to Traditional Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine. Baccalaureate study in nutrition within the Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine program leads to a simultaneously granted Bachelor of Science degree in nutrition and a Master of Science degree in Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine.

To meet the needs of students, MCAHM affirms its commitment to educating broadly informed, ethically responsible, and scientifically competent professionals by offering the highest accredited entry-level degree in the field. An essential purpose is to meet the needs of a community that is increasingly aware of the importance of nutrition and herb therapy; the Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine program combines TCM theory with nutrition principles.

Students from across the U.S. and several foreign countries have entered our programs. The average age of students is 38 years old, and students have a wide range of educational backgrounds and work experience. MCAHM seeks a diverse student population and encourages anyone interested in Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine, with the appropriate prerequisites, to consider a career in Traditional Chinese Medicine.

After completing their program, graduates have the full range of knowledge, competencies, and skills necessary to begin a successful practice and meet the healthcare demands of the 21st century. These demands will result in new advances in TCM and unique ways that traditional medicine can be used to meet today's healthcare problems.

MCAHM's educational programs reflect the best thinking of our faculty, administration, and advisors. Its goals, which are to facilitate our students' learning, must be consistent with realistic career expectations. These goals must also be related to the requirements of licensing and accrediting bodies and is responsive to the public trust. To achieve these goals, the faculty and students must work together to establish a mutually supportive learning community and an educational partnership from which both can benefit and

to which both can contribute.

The College fulfills its purpose by carefully creating programs with academic objectives and clinical competencies that lead to entry-level independent practice. Its programs ensure that students have the necessary theoretical and clinical background to meet the challenges of practice and develop professional attitudes and behaviors that lead to success in a field where referrals are crucial to growth. The College meets its goals by focusing on the modern therapeutic techniques of Traditional Chinese Medicine. The program avoids diluting the curriculum with other holistic health techniques, which may be perceived as diverse but lack the necessary foundation in TCM needed to address complex healthcare problems found in Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine.

B. Market - Discuss the nature of your school and the business in which it is engaged. Describe who your existing and potential customers are and what motivates them to enroll in your school. Explain how you let customers know you are in business. Finally, identify who your competitors are and how you are different from them.

MCAHM was founded in 1979, making it one of the oldest schools of Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine in America. Since then, faculty and student interns have contributed to community service at Cook County Hospital, the Pontifical Order of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi in Milwaukee, and the Chicago AIDS Alternative Health Project.

Graduates of our programs work in hospitals, medical groups, and private practice. They are on the faculty of other schools, the boards of professional associations, state, and national agencies, and are on the staff of hospitals across the country.

Since 1986, College administrators and faculty have participated in local and national organizations, including the Council of Colleges of Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine. The College has been accredited since 1987. In 2020, the College's Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine programs received a seven-year re-accreditation.

The College continues to collaborate with leaders of TCM education to ensure that our programs follow the true principles of TCM theory while keeping up to date with the current clinical practice of Chinese Medicine. The College's goal is to retain the traditional principles and attitudes from times past, which still draw patients to this medicine today: a medicine that values the spirit and heart as it heals the body.

Students interested in holistic healing seek an education that leads to a legal, professional practice licensed in their home state. Students from across the U.S. and several foreign countries have entered our programs. The College has a presence on the internet and uses print advertisements in local publications that interest prospective students.

The College has received requests from various healthcare organizations for presentations on the use of Acupuncture to treat various conditions. Dr. Dunbar has presented at the Centegra Health Systems hospitals (Northwestern Medicine), Baxter Laboratories research departments, and multiple oncology clinics.

Although there are no other Colleges of Acupuncture in Wisconsin, there are two in Northern Illinois. One is a California-based school that requires students to maintain very flexible work schedules, and the other is a Chiropractic College, which attracts a different type of prospective student.

The Advocate / Aurora Healthcare system continues to integrate Acupuncture into its outpatient clinics. MCAHM graduates are now working at various locations in Wisconsin, in addition to our graduates working at the Cancer Treatment Centers of America. These treatments are a growing trend showing the integration of Acupuncture into mainstream healthcare. The U.S. Veterans Administration grants vouchers for Acupuncture treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The College clinic is serving veterans through the new voucher system, which pays the entire cost of 15 treatments.

2024 update

The College has engaged a Madison, Wisconsin-based internet marketing firm to manage all social media. The results have been fantastic. This new presence promotes public awareness of the benefits of Chinese medicine, nutrition, and Acupuncture. This action has increased the number of catalog requests, increased the number of new patients who receive treatment, and added a sense of community for the student body.

The College updates the official website to reflect a more modern look and feel. The market for new students continues to be strong. The College added the ability for students to access the library collections online at www.mcomlibraryresources.com. This site now contains research links, mindmaps, and the ability for students to make an online book request.

C. Management - Describe your management team and how it functions to lead, administer, and position the school. If your school has Advisory Boards, describe how the school uses them for program and school improvement.

Management Structure

There is a high level of individualized personal responsibility in each administrative position. The President has determined that the group structure was inefficient and that one-on-one interaction would lead to more productivity and personal responsibility.

Job descriptions delineate responsibilities in a detailed listing of duties. The organizational plan works efficiently to manage two campuses where some staff activities relate to both campuses and some to a single campus. The Racine Campus Director works closely with the President as an administrative team and has a crucial leadership position regarding all administrative policies and procedures.

The Registrar has been in the position for 29 years and is well-versed in the Campus Management software system applications to take a student from initial registration through graduation.

The Financial Aid Director and the Manager of Student Financial Compliance regularly attend state and federal conferences to stay abreast of the changing regulations. They attend the Financial Aid Management for Education (FAME) annual convention (now in-person) each year. Our financial aid director attends weekly seminars on financial aid and financial matters.

The Admissions Director plans recruiting efforts, including print and web-based activities, holds open houses, and attends various health fairs and other functions where prospective students can learn about the College.

To ensure consistency in operations and a plan for possible staff changes, the various members have created flow charts that accurately show their duties in a detailed and realistic manner. These charts ensure that each staff member knows what must be done and the order in which it should be done. The charts are regularly reviewed and updated when needed so that the numerous compliance issues are current and completed on time.

Advisory Board

Advisory Board members are selected for expertise in various areas and public representation. They include input from financial and legal knowledge, elected office, the military, the arts, Acupuncture associations, alumni, and the public interest. The advisors review for approval, government compliance documentation, and internal college statistics and actively participate in planning and evaluation. The Board reviews changes in the mission statement and participates in program reviews. Each week, Dr. Dunbar meets with one of the Board members to discuss all aspects of the College's operations. The results of these meetings are brought to the Board during regularly scheduled meetings.

The Directors attend all Board of Advisors meetings and have developed a very good working relationship with its members.

While the Board of Directors does have final authority, it looks to the Board of Advisors for direction and approval in all circumstances. The Directors and Advisors have informal meetings, consultations, and formal Board meetings. Through these two activities, the individual members can participate with personal input and also act as a body, giving a consensus opinion.

2024 update

The College continues to use the anonymous suggestion box at www.mcomsuggestionbox.com. This site is reviewed weekly, and College personnel can respond to questions and suggestions without knowing the students' names or personal information.

Doug Pittman was instrumental during this year's financial aid audit, and due to his work, the College has no material findings.

The College continues to use a resource website for the Advisory Board and the Faculty. The site offers recaps of discussions, new procedures, and policies and is a method of discussions between meetings.

D. SWOT Analysis. Identify your school's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (S.W.O.T.). Update 2019.

Strength

- Continuous syllabi review to ensure Carnegie credit compliance.
- The College continuously reviews and updates the PowerPoint presentations used during lectures.
- Experienced faculty with new faculty in training as assistants.
- KSA (Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities from nccaom.org) project to match national and institutional standards, including reworking the final paper in the Master's program.
- Continuous monitoring of the Capstone courses in TCM theory, herbs, and bioscience to ensure the curriculum matches the national standards.
- Experienced office staff.
- Experienced key administrators (campus directors average 25 years of experience).
- Continued very low default rate on student loans **2.5%**
- Dr. Julie Mayrose, EdD; former Vice-President of Silver Lake College, as Assessment Director to coordinate all assessment activities at MCAHM, and consults with Dr. Dunbar on high education issues.
- The College uses the learning management platform Padlet.
- Clinical discussions during internship have been moved to padlet.com, sample at <https://padlet.com/mcompresident/oi3dcs35ftklx88y>
- Dr. Dunbar graduated from Harvard University from a graduate program in Learning Design and Technology and has implemented numerous improvements to course delivery using Harvard's eLearning framework.
- The College continues to offer free online and live tutoring.
- The College offers online training for faculty during the year.

Goals 2023-24

Virtual Online Open Houses and New Student Orientation

The College created virtual online open houses and new student orientation using the new Canvas LMS in combination with the Zoom video conferencing platform. This new style allows multiple staff members and faculty to participate remotely. Prospective and enrolled students can attend without driving to the campus.

New

A new feature of the prospective student process is to provide sample videos and material to students who show interest in making an application for admission. This sample is the same LMS that new students use when they enroll. The College has expanded conducting in-person and online virtual tours, which include adding prospective students as observers on live online courses within the Padlet platform.

MCAHM Learning Resources for Library Support and Student Service

The library support staff continues to update the website www.mcomlibraryresources.com to enable students to use the library and conduct research 24/7 remotely. In 2021, this resource was opened to the general public and has received positive feedback from Acupuncture students nationwide.

Update 2024

In 2024, the College noticed increased library book donations from retiring graduates. These donations represent 300 additional titles in the library. Both College librarians use the Zoom meeting platform to assist students in academic research.

The College has added a direct phone number for students to contact the librarian for online assistance and help with their academic research.

Virtual Mind Maps to Support Memorization

Through assessment, the College identified the need for memorization support in specific areas such as Acupuncture Point Location, Herbal Materia Medica, and Herbal Formulations. The library support staff, working with the Dean of Students, have created mind maps for these subjects and included them in the mcomlibraryresources.com page on the internet. In addition, the College is working to develop content-related crossword puzzles to be published to this site.

The College's mind map working group created over 350 disease-based maps illustrating critical diagnostic considerations when arriving at a Chinese medical diagnosis. These are used during the clinic review courses as the basis for case discussions.

Update 2024

Additional mind maps have been created for the sub-specialty of hospital-based non-opioid pain management using Acupuncture. This new specialty was designed within the program to enable more of the College's graduates to apply for positions in medical centers and hospitals. A new staff member has returned after a COVID break to create mind maps to support clinical courses covering Acupuncture treatment of post-surgical pain and pain-related treatments. This new set of mind maps will enable interns to address the opioid crisis better.

Anonymous Online Suggestion Box Update

The College continues to use an anonymous suggestion box platform, www.mcomsuggestionbox.com. Individuals comment using their email addresses; however, the College cannot see the individual email address when responding. This communication method has reduced the student's stress during these difficult times. Chris Krajniak, an Advisory Board member, and Dr. Dunbar review the suggestions weekly to take action if necessary.

Assessing Student Satisfaction Using Examsoft

The College monitors student satisfaction using questions (voluntary) as part of all examinations within the Examsoft platform. This allows for quarterly "check-ins" between the College and the students. It appears that students appreciate both anonymous and non-anonymous opportunities to give feedback.

Distance Education Approved by ACAHM

MCAHM was approved in the fall of 2023 to offer distance education by ACAHM and NC-Sara. The College continues to offer in-person practicum courses.

Community Outreach

MCAHM started a pilot program in early 2020 with the Ascension Health System using no-cost Acupuncture treatments to reduce stress within in-patient hospice care. The initial patient and administration response was overwhelmingly positive. The College had planned to expand the services. Both projects were put on hold in March of 2020 when COVID-19 struck. The College is working with Ascension Health System to offer Acupuncture treatments at the Luther Hospice Center in Milwaukee again in 2024.

No Cost Use of Classroom Facilities

The College continues to offer free use of its classrooms and facilities to local not-for-profit organizations. An example is the use of the space to provide community-based CPR training.

Update 2024

This program was re-instated post-COVID-19.

Online Formative Quizzes

The College uses the online examination platform Examsoft for paperless examinations. The College uses it for weekly formative quizzes to reinforce classroom lectures and reading. Each quarter, ten quizzes are published for student practice.

Update 2024

The College's assessment director has determined that using formative quizzes has increased summative performance, and MCAHM will continue to refine the quiz process. In addition, crossword puzzles and Quizlet flashcards have been added to courses. For courses that require weekly assignments, the submission of work has been moved to the Formsite platform, which provides a receipt to the student and sends the work directly to the faculty member's email. For a course such as A603 Evidence-Based Practice, the Formsite submission has replaced weekly quizzes.

Gainful Employment

Update 2024

The College employs a part-time staff member to update our graduate files and measure practice and employment rates.

Weaknesses

- Adapting course delivery to support millennials, GenX, and other adult students.
- Limited space for expansion of clinical services and library holdings.
- Expanding outreach to prospective students on expanding professional opportunities

Update 2024

The College continues to offer weekly formative online quizzes for each student in each course to re-enforce the weekly lectures. The College offers free online and live tutoring. The change to the Padlet platform has enabled the College to tailor educational support to the wide variety of generations attending MCAHM.

The College owns approximately 8,000 sq. ft. of medical office space on the first floor of the current location. This space was previously occupied by Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare. The first floor has been leased to a medical group. The chiropractors have vacated the space; a portion of the library holdings in storage have been moved downstairs, and part of the clinic will allow for clinic expansion.

Opportunities

- The possible inclusion of Acupuncture in Wisconsin's Badger Care program was put on hold during COVID-19 and reactivation of this opportunity will be a game changing event in support of low income and under served citizens.
- Expand clinical services to include affiliation with physicians and medical clinics.
- Currency with national standards and future vision of the field.
- Continued increased employment trends in the field of healthcare, including integrative medicine.
- Aurora Health System has created an Acupuncture department and is continuing to hire MCAHM graduates.
- Update the list of Wisconsin insurance companies covering Acupuncture treatment.

Update 2024

The Department of Labor and Statistics created a Classification of an Occupation code for Acupuncture. This represents a dramatic change in government recognition of the profession, leading to an increase in public recognition of the profession. This classification has allowed the College to monitor changes in Acupuncture salaries as they are listed on <https://www.onetonline.org/link/summary/29-1291.00?redir=29-1199.01>.

The College regularly conducts email campaigns targeting healthcare administrators to promote the hiring of our graduates. The College is redesigning its website (www.addanacupuncturist.com) to promote the advantages of employing Acupuncturists. This website will contain a new searchable database to allow prospective patients and employers to find MCAHM graduates by zip code.

Threat

- As gasoline prices increase, the College needs to encourage and help arrange car pooling.
- Addressing the continued student stressors surrounding financial aid debt.

Update 2024

The College will continue monitoring USDOE rules and initiatives regarding changes in financial aid.

Students receive their financial aid distribution, which includes disclosure of the total financial aid debt, including the disbursement and estimated monthly payment based on the total debt as of that date. This has had the effect of students choosing to borrow less.

Based on the results of the SWOT analysis, provide the following: three to five goals for strengths/weaknesses and how they will be addressed by your school.

Strength: Syllabi have been revised to ensure compliance with Carnegie credits (homework vs. classroom time).

- The College name change from Midwest College of Oriental Medicine to Midwest College of Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine has been well received by the entire College community.
- The College is building an online video server to enable students to watch individual classes in advance of the actual live in-person courses.
- Learning activities were expanded within the Padlets to include helpful links to outside sites that support course content.
- Review and revise outcomes and competencies based upon changes to the "Knowledge, Skills and Abilities" listed by the National Commission for the Certification of Acupuncture and Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine.
- New textbooks are used to ensure sufficient and relevant readings to meet USDOE, Carnegie credits, ACAHM Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine (ACAHM), and National Commission for the Certification of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM) requirements.

Strength: Response to the changing competencies and outcomes as the profession matures.

The College is continuously monitoring proposed changes in the standards of the Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine; this is being referred to as the "Revised Master's Standards". It is using competency-based terminology instead of the older "curriculum content" language. The College has developed competency-based rubrics using both the ACAHM standards and the Accreditation Commission of Graduate Medical Education.

The College has developed handouts and working documents based on the Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities rubric of the National Commission for the Certification of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine.

Dr. Chelnick and Dr. LaPoint are on both the Entry Level Standards and Curriculum Development Committees, where new proposals are discussed. Dr. LaPoint is now the President of the Council of Colleges of Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine. This organization sets the curriculum standards for all of the 63 member colleges.

This enables the College to do long-term curriculum planning to ensure that the College maintains currency with the educational standards and resulting marketplace positioning.

Update 2024

Changes consolidating some standards are now published and Drs. Chelnick and LaPoint continue to participate as committee members to keep abreast of any changes that will affect the College's programs.

Weakness: Addressing the continued student stressors surrounding the economy and financial aid debt.

MCAHM's average student loan debt is less than similar colleges in the Midwest. MCAHM continues to use a form when students receive more than \$4,000 in financial aid checks. This form indicates their estimated monthly payment after graduation based on the total student loan debt at the time of the disbursement. This information has resulted in some students borrowing less.

E. Future Think - Describe your school five years from now. What will it look like and how it will be positioned in the marketplace?

The Joint Commission for the Accreditation of Hospitals has recognized Acupuncture as a replacement for opioid medication. The recognition of Acupuncture as a mainstream therapy for treating all aspects of pain will allow the College to form internships and integrate partnerships with medical centers and hospitals. As third-party payments for Acupuncture increase, the College and the profession will have better opportunities to provide healthcare services to a broader patient base.

MCAHM will continue to engage its students in a "traditional and holistic" approach to the field while acquainting students with the idea of "evidence-informed practice," which is more in keeping with the philosophy of traditional medicine.

In five years, the College's curriculum will continue to represent the mission statement with greater use of technology to support the students, faculty, and staff through virtual cadaver dissection and 3D imaging.

The College plans to assess the need for a future first professional doctorate as described by ACAHM. The Board of Directors and Board of Advisors will be briefed after an assessment of need is designed by Dr. Julie Mayrose, Ed.D.

As the practice of Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine (AHM) becomes more integrated into mainstream medicine, this will require graduates to work as part of a healthcare team and participate collaboratively in patient care and decision-making. Therefore, future students will need to better interact within the structured and rigorous environment encountered in any scientific career.

New graduate certificate programs in pain management, hospital-based practice, and sports medicine will provide specialties for graduates.

The College will continue to revise the Practice Management components of the curriculum to reflect the current practice models and add additional components to prepare graduates for professional practice better.