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# **FIU Reactivates MHSA Program in Health Services Administration**

A degree in health services administration can help you open doors to positions within the healthcare sector as well as help others reach for higher levels of employment. The Health Services Administration Program at Florida International University (FIU) offers a contemporary plan of study for students wishing to pursue careers in health services administration.

Students can earn both an undergraduate and graduate degree in health services administration. These degrees will

academically prepare graduates to qualify for positions in management and leadership within a healthcare organization up to and including executive positions such as a CEO.

The undergraduate program (BHSA) is designed to prepare students to enter a health care organization and pursue a middle-management level position providing oversight and management. The BHSA degree will also prepare a student to continue their education and enroll in a graduate program in health services.

The newly reactivated MHSA program will enroll its first cohort in the Fall 2016 semester and will provide students with a state-of-the-art academic plan focused and designed to prepare students for executive level positions within a healthcare organization.

✖ “The undergraduate program has been very strong and growing which is why we felt it was in the best of interest of our students to then offer this master’s program to accompany it,” says HSA Program Director, Sal Barbera. “Our undergraduate students understand with a BHSA degree they will be limited in their upward mobility in an organization and need to plan to eventually enroll in a graduate program.

The BHSA program will also offer clinically prepared students with an academic plan that will qualify and prepare them to seek a management/administrative position in health care such as a nurse manager or physical therapy supervisor.

According to Barbera, the BHSA program is blessed with a highly dedicated and committed faculty that brings real-world experience to students that complement the academic resources available in textbooks. “Highly qualified and experienced faculty will challenge students and ready them to address relevant and ever-changing challenges in the healthcare industry. The Health Services Administration Program will function with an integrated faculty that will promote ease of transition and continuity from undergraduate to graduate studies.”

Earning your masters in health services administration degree at FIU offers students several distinct advantages over other academic centers, notes Barbera. Students at FIU understand the academic requirements they must consider to pursue a career in health services administration. Many of these students were desirous of continuing their studies at FIU but were not satisfied with the academic programs available. As a result, Barbera explains, a number of BHSA graduates left FIU and enrolled in graduate programs within South Florida that provided a concentrated curriculum in health services consistent with their future career plans.

“With the launching of the MHSA program in the Fall 2016 semester, FIU will now be able to offer students the most comprehensive and subject-specific academic plan of study to prepare students to succeed in pursuing a career in health services administration,” Barbera says. “This program will continue to provide the South Florida community and region with highly sought after healthcare leaders who will guide, deliver, and oversee healthcare in the community and contribute to the South Florida market recognized for its progressive, evidence-based approach.”

Any student who wants to pursue a career in health services administration needs to complete their formal education as soon as they are able, recommends Barbera.

“I tell students all the time—you know a master’s degree is essential to advance in this field and what I recommend is to get it as soon as possible because you never know what you’re going to be dealt with in life,” he says. “The sooner you can get your academic preparation done, it’s done. Also, with a master’s degree, there’s no cap on where you can go—even being a CEO of a hospital or healthcare system. So you can keep climbing the ladder. Once you get into a healthcare organization, then it’s all up to you and how well you perform, but the master’s can help put you into that position.”

In addition, he says that students must understand that without a graduate degree they could be limited in their

potential for upward mobility. "To be successful it takes much more than a formal college education as this requirement will only get you through the front door. Successful leaders in healthcare possess underestimated and highly notable skills in working with people."

He stresses that these "people skills" are necessary when you consider the wide spectrum of stakeholders you must work with in a healthcare environment. Without the ability to work in a team environment with many different personalities you will be doomed to failure regardless of the number of degrees you possess and the quality of the universities these degrees were obtained from.

"Healthcare is about people and as a leader you will be charged with motivating people that come from a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures," says Barbera. "Successful motivational techniques for one group may fail with another and it is the leader's job to find out what works and what doesn't work and lead accordingly."

Barbera expects the field of health services administration to continue to evolve over the next decade further fueling a need for degrees in this field.

"I know this continues to be said over and over but more emphasis will be placed on cost-effective, evidence-based approaches that produce outcomes," he says. "Over the next 5 to 10 years, we will phase out fee-for-service reimbursement that provides an incentive to do more. We will see more emphasis on cost-effective approaches to an illness that will be able to support clinical interventions that provide specific, measurable outcomes."

Since reimbursement will be bundled and paid prospectively which will demand collaboration amongst providers that will be meaningful as it impacts payment for care and how all providers are reimbursed, Barbera adds.

"It actually will look like an expansion of DRGs that pay hospitals prospectively based on an admitting diagnosis,"

he says. "All providers will be scrambling to maintain a position in the provider chain and looking for partners that are attractive, with a shared vision, and cost-effective. Population health will be more than talked about as providers will be held accountable for ensuring and providing for the health care needs of the population served. Regardless of who sits in the White House and controls Congress, the cost of healthcare will continue to put pressure on the industry and must be addressed as the cost trends are clearly non-sustainable."

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