



Editorial Comment

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There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure.

— Colin Powell (1937 -)

Since the beginning of discussions about placing a new medical school in El Paso there have been questions about whether a clinically-based curriculum would produce well-educated and nationally competitive students. This month El Paso has something of which to be proud and some of those questions have been resolved. In the midst of violence in Juarez and a changing economic landscape, the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine (PLFSOM) has a new honor—the class of 2013 took and passed the USMLE Step I exam with flying colors.

According to a press release from PLFSOM on July 28, 2011, the first time pass rate for this class was 97% with an average score of 225. The national pass rate for the USMLE Step I is 91-92% with an average score 221.

The passage of the exam is not a guarantee that each student will continue to be successful, but it does suggest that this curriculum can stand up to traditional first-year curricula at older medical schools. It also suggests that the caliber of student enrolled at PLFSOM is quite high.

For those unfamiliar with the medical school, the current curriculum at PLFSOM is extremely different from traditional curricula used in the first 2 years. Normally, the first years emphasize basic sciences (physiology, microbiology, histology and anatomy) without a clinical basis.

Students at the PLFSOM learn anatomy, biochemistry, physiology and other basic science concepts in the context of specific clinical presentations. Students gain clinical competence using highly complex mannequins that simulate patient complaints and situations. Additionally, the Society, Community and Individual (SCI) Course helps students to develop skills in areas such as Spanish language, public health concepts and home visits that maximize their interaction with the U.S./Mexico border community.

This high pass rate is a personal success for those closely involved with training students, but also a success for all those who have a stake in our future doctors and our health of border community.

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