



# First steps in Medicine: educational, emotional and vocational transition project from school to university

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## Abstract

This paper presents a project of extracurricular activities that complement the curriculum of the Medicine degree, aimed at the well-being of the students, which is framed in the strategic plan and allows for the development of a better transition for first-time students. In Medicine, transitions have a particular impact, influencing retention, dropout, and academic performance. High academic demands, especially in the first year, can cause stress and vulnerability, inducing anxiety and depression; Therefore, environments that stimulate diverse skills and vocational maturity are needed. Student well-being is key to the Medicine degree, encompassing physical, mental, academic and financial health. For this reason, the Medicine degree at the Autonomous University of Central America has a program to support the comprehensive well-being of students, from admission to graduation, as well as the development of skills that allow them to face challenges. academic and personal in his career.

KEYWORDS: MEDICINE STUDENTS, TRANSITION, VOCATIONAL, EMOTIONAL

## Introduction

Transitions in academic life represent moments of change and adaptation to new realities, stages of crisis or lack of definition. It is a remarkable personal and social experience, but not neutral, in which identity is altered and perhaps even shaken (Gimeno, 1996). This phenomenon has been known in the educational environment under various concepts; there are studies related to transition, curricular continuity, student adaptation, transit and articulation of teaching, among others.

In the case of medical students, this reality is, since decision-making in choosing a career, study techniques, adaptation to the learning methodology, among other aspects, can have positive or negative repercussions depending of the skills that the student develops. These will also have a result in the permanence, dropout, academic performance and disapproval rates (Izaguirre, 2020).

Student well-being is considered the central strategic axis of the Medicine degree, since, without students in conditions suitable for adequate learning, there is no academic project that can be viable. The word well-being is broad and includes several areas of great importance to the student, such as physical, mental, academic and financial health. Therefore, the program aimed to develop a student well-being program, based on tools and resources that facilitate attention to their academic and personal challenges in a balanced and effective way.

The ninth report on the State of Education (Programa Estado de la Nación, 2023) points out as one of the repercussions of the so-called educational blackout, an impact on learning in the educational trajectory of students, the impact on the academic transition to higher cycles and on the development socio-emotional, caused by remote education. Therefore, they recommend that educational institutions provide support resources to students to foster more positive educational environments and have timely vocational guidance, among other aspects.

### **Theoretical reference**

Next, the variables that have been identified in the academic experience will be mentioned, then, emphasize on how to manage them so that the transition is successful.

- Social and work environment: We must keep in mind that it is changing and that the training of new professionals must be permanently adapted to include the needs of the environment. Furthermore, current economic pressures put permanence at university at risk (Millalén, s/f).
- Family environment: Many Costa Rican homes are under great pressures of different kinds, the most common being homes where both parents, whether living together or separately, must work long hours to support the household (Sánchez y Calleja, 2020).
- Academic environment: The responsibility of high school educators has been to train students to successfully pursue a college career. The responsibility of university educators is to receive these students, level them and transform them into productive professionals who provide service to society (Aragón et al., 2022).
- The students: The transition from school to university has involved moving from a familiar and safe environment, such as secondary school, where the relatively immature young person has grown up with his peers for several years, progressively studying familiar subjects such as mathematics, social studies and science, to a new and unfamiliar environment with totally different subjects. To this reality, we must add that there is also the clash between two diametrically different types of generations: the students, who are mostly Generation Z, and their teachers and administrators, are mostly Generation X and Millennials (Coloma, 2022; Heredia y García, 2018).

### **Methodology of the student well-being program**

For the design of the student well-being program, opportunities were identified to improve student well-being in admission, permanence and completion of the study plan. Therefore, a program was developed in two senses: the curricular and strategic ones and those oriented to student well-being and other strategic aspects that facilitate the student's transition to the university environment:

Curricular and strategic changes: A deep analysis of the universal references and disciplinary currents of thought was conducted; an updated epidemiological analysis of the national health environment; the profile of the national general practitioner was reviewed; a competitive analysis of all Medical Schools in Costa Rica was carried out, and two important documents were generated: an official document with the curricular and epistemological foundations of the study plan and the strategic plan of the Medicine career.

For the strategic plan, a redefinition of the vision and mission of the career was made. Next, a study was conducted with 193 interviews with new students that provided clarity regarding the profile of the student who wishes to enter Medicine at the UACA. In this strategic plan, the central and predominant position of the student stands out.

Changes included in the strategic axes that tangibly impact the student's transition to the university environment: Some actions implemented to facilitate the student's transition were analyzed with examples in accordance with each strategic axis of the plan. Some activities are perpetuated and

promoted through feedback from existing students and graduates to incoming students, facilitating the transition process. Based on this exercise, a student well-being program was designed.

## **Results**

Among the actions carried out by the degree, it has been leaving the classrooms and going to schools, to vocational fairs, as well as caring for students on the university campus. It is worth highlighting at this point the “wearing the scrub”, as a vocational strategy that emerges from the technique of the six thinking hats (Tejedor, 2008).

Also, the Student Manual was designed to establish the regulatory framework, guidelines and ethical values applied during the Degree. The execution of a student scholarship program stands out, as well as the implementation of the Quarterly Seminar on Student Orientation and Well-being, the periodic Mental Health seminars, access to free medical care, free student residences for students from rural areas and the use of the Campus as a generator of comprehensive Health (medical, mental, physical, among others).

At the completion of the study plan, the student is accompanied in the admission process to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Costa Rica

## **Discussion**

It is necessary to mention three variables that are very important and that generate important shock in the teaching of Medicine:

- Shock number 1 - Attention time: Currently, students have an extremely short attention time and Medical Education is based on very detailed and quite rote learning that entails hours of study and concentration.
- Shock number 2- Immediate results: The Medicine programs generated by medical professors and curriculum specialists are structured, sequential and logical. They are designed to insert a professional into a very competitive environment with multiple high-impact tests that depend on structured teaching. Professors emphasize the importance of learning to be successful and be a better professional. Meanwhile, the student sees them as useless obstacles in the immediate advancement of their career.
- Shock number 3 - Technology and electronic devices: On one hand, we have the “senior” generations who are not so technological and the new generations
- who seem to be unable to detach themselves from their cell phones and social networks, also affecting shock number 1.

Given the previous conditions, university programs are required to balance these differences and increase the possibilities of permanence.

## **Conclusions**

In this context, it has been identified that the academic demands of medical students are constant and growing. In this regard, some authors point out that academic stress produces vulnerability, particularly in first-year students, inducing anxiety and depression [10]; therefore, different environments are required to stimulate the exercise of varied skills.

The importance of providing support to medical students in several stages of university life is outstanding. On the other hand, many variables are identified that may affect the transition from secondary education to university education. Some of them may go unnoticed by the student as they are

part of an internal work of curricular and strategic nature. Others are much more noticeable, and are great generators of stress for students, requiring a more comprehensive approach.

### Limitations and future reasearches

Although the Medicine degree has a student well-being program that takes a comprehensive approach to provide adequate support to students in the various stages of academic life, the development of an orientation program for students is identified as an opportunity for improvement, so students can transition smoothly to vocational maturity. Based on the line of work that has been developed at the curricular level, the aim is to investigate the implementation of a redesign that allows reducing the initial overload of the study plan.

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