

[OSU prescribes joint MBA for its pharmacy students](#)

Premium content from Portland Business Journal by Cliff Collins, Contributing writer

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Education

Oregon State University is teaming up with **Oregon Health & Science University** to offer a joint MBA and doctor of pharmacy degree beginning this fall.

OSU created the program to respond to industry and the economy in an increasingly complex health care environment.

Designed to enhance business skills, knowledge and practical experience of candidates for the doctor of pharmacy degree program, the joint degree will allow pharmacists to move into management and executive positions in the health care and pharmaceutical industries.

This offers the 80-plus students who attain the doctorate each year “one more way to differentiate themselves in a highly competitive environment,” said Mark Zabriske, dean of the OSU College of Pharmacy.

As health care becomes more complex, having an MBA degree helps each pharmacy graduate’s curriculum vitae “jump out of the pile,” he said. “It’s a business where having financial savvy and managerial skills can really pay off.”

OSU students earning a pharmacy doctorate, or Pharm.D., traditionally spend two years studying the basic courses in Corvallis, then complete a third year in clinical and therapeutic training. That third year consists of seven six-week rotations and clerkships, primarily in Portland, at OHSU, Legacy Health and Providence Health & Services.

For the joint-degree, students will begin taking MBA electives while earning the Pharm.D. After they do, they will take from three to five additional terms to complete their MBA, said Jim Coakley, OSU associate dean for graduate business programs.

“There’s been an incredible amount of interest ... in this program from chains and independents to health systems, that are looking for managerial expertise and knowledge of accounting and HR issues,” added Zabriske. This additional training will help them become leaders in health care.

According to Coakley, tuition and fees for OSU’s pharmacy doctoral program are \$20,400 per year for Oregon residents and \$34,000 per year for out-of-state residents. Because the university uses a tuition plateau, students in the program don’t have to pay any additional cost to take MBA classes. Once they complete the Pharm.D. program in Portland, however, extra terms needed to complete the MBA will cost \$4,345 per quarter, with the total depending on how many business courses each student took during their pharmacy program.

The essence of this double degree is the integration of pharmacy and business coursework, which enables easier completion of the MBA while finishing the pharmacy program. OSU is using some

business courses to satisfy electives in the pharmacy program and some pharmacy courses to satisfy electives and experiential learning components of the MBA program.

Although some MBA courses will be available in Portland, some of the foundation courses of the MBA program will likely be available only in Corvallis, said College of Business spokeswoman Jenn Casey.

The dual program allows OSU to expand its MBA program to the Portland market in a niche unoccupied by any other university, Casey said.

Jennifer Vollmer, who lives in Corvallis and is in her second year of the pharmacy doctorate program at OSU, majored in business management as an undergraduate and plans to obtain the joint degree.

“As new pharmacists, it seems that almost all of us will be a part of managing a business, whether it be a small community pharmacy or a part of a larger health system,” she said. “From feedback I have received from practicing pharmacists, I feel that having some knowledge and training around business management will help us transition into practice more smoothly and be more successful in any practice setting.”

Vollmer also thinks that as the health care system as a whole changes, a need likely will arise for new business models in both the pharmacy industry and medical industry as a whole. “I feel that there will be a place for pharmacists in helping to shape these new business models to maximize patient care. And I hope that by having both a business and pharmacy background, we can be a positive part of those changes.”

Although details are still being worked out, OSU also plans to introduce a second combined MBA degree option in the fall of 2012: an MBA in Accountancy.

In accounting, students pursuing CPA certification traditionally go to school for five years, earning a master’s degree in accountancy in that fifth year while taking courses needed for them to pass the CPA exam.

For the MBAA, the students will take needed accounting courses in that fifth year, but forgo others to take the core MBA classes. The MBAA will cost \$19,245 for in-state students who complete the degree in their fifth year. Out-of-state residents will pay \$26,694.

Fast Facts

OSU’s MBA program offers thesis, cleantech and commercialization tracks.