

Leadership in Higher Education as a Physician

Great Reasons to Explore Opportunities in College Health

The role of a physician leader in higher education is exciting and energizing — an opportunity to positively support student wellbeing and, therefore, healthier and more successful students. The role is also often misunderstood, and its influence nearly always underestimated.

These leaders are senior executives responsible for a wide spectrum of health-related programs and services for students; this role may be called Executive Director, or Assistant or Associate Vice President.

Imagine, for example, the Executive Director of Health and Wellness as being the Chief Public Health Officer of a community. Now imagine that community includes and embraces vibrant, diverse, and passionate learners. The physician leader, the Executive Director, has the primary responsibility for an institution-wide team which addresses the healthcare needs of students, and, therefore, supports their learning and success. In addition to the vital work of clinical administration, this critical institutional leader carries the key responsibility for providing vision and direction to the staff in the healthcare portfolio and for ensuring quality care for all students. Just imagine the change one can make in the lives of those who will be the leaders of tomorrow.

Many qualified physicians still wonder if college health is “right” for them. Keeling & Associates has extensive experience recruiting physicians to serve in higher education roles. In addition, we benefit from the experience of Drs. Keeling and Spear who have a combined 40 years of college health leadership at large universities. We understand the priorities of the role, as well as the hesitations of doctors who are considering a change in scenery.

We engaged with a small group of long-serving college health directors, representing a combined 100 years of experience providing and leading university health services. While their backgrounds, experiences, institutions, and priorities differ, there are several key points that were the same across the board. They focused on these five things:

1

College health serves a unique population.

Students are a distinctive population with particular healthcare needs. College health professionals have the opportunity to inspire and work with students to form life-long healthy habits and ways of living. There is an important educational component — teaching and preparing students to be good healthcare consumers. Students are able to learn about healthy living, then, in turn, teach their peers and others in their community.

2

Working holistically with students benefits everyone.

College health environments allow, and require, effective integration of experiences for students. Focusing on the entirety of students’ lives, including mental and physical health, assures opportunities for individual attention and meaningful long-term differences to students. Multi-disciplinary service delivery models and presence in the campus community create substantial change that can be seen and felt over time.

3

Expertise, skills, and experience contribute to overall campus well-being.

Physician leaders in colleges and universities are able to learn and share with colleagues who serve as advocates for healthy campus communities across the country. Because teaching, learning, and a holistic approach to health and wellbeing comes so naturally to many physicians, the college health setting can be an ideal practice environment.

4

The arrival of fall and the start of each academic year brings new beginnings.

Beyond the provision of clinical services, a leadership position in college health offers a broad campus role — creating a healthy learning environment and fostering a health-conscious campus community that prepares students for their lives after graduation. At the beginning of each year, new members join the community bringing with them an openness to learning, and the group leaves taking with them the lessons learned in and out of the classroom.

5

Excellent work-life balance.

In addition to professional fulfillment, there are potential lifestyle improvements when working in college health, including a structured work schedule, the flow of the academic calendar, generous fringe benefits, and the opportunity to be part of the intellectual and social life of the campus.

We love higher education.

We think you do too.

Come talk with us.

www.keelingassociates.com
212-229-4750
search@keelingassociates.com