



KEY COMPETENCIES IN THE MHA PROGRAM: CRITICAL THINKING

by Col. Jason Richter, PhD.

A 2016 survey of 63,924 managers and 14,167 recent graduates found that critical thinking is the number one skill managers feel new graduates are commonly lacking. What is critical thinking, anyway? Oxford defines it as “the objective analysis and evaluation of an issue in order to form a judgment.” Let’s break that apart into two pieces: 1) evaluation of an issue; 2) form a judgment. Evaluation of an issue is the ability to determine what information may be needed and then synthesize all that information. Part of this is determining what is relevant and what is not. Then forming the judgment is to make a decision from that synthesized information.

I’ll share a recent simple example of critical thinking demonstrated at my medical clinic. We had our budget cut slightly this year and had to make decisions on retaining or cutting contract personnel. When it came to a discussion about our utilization manager contract, our leadership was informed we can’t lose that person. She does too much for us. Not wanting to simply accept anecdotes, we asked the unit to provide workload data. When we examined it, we were very surprised to see that workload indicated there wasn’t even enough for one person, let alone two. We then inquired if there is anything we are not seeing in the data, to give the clinic one more opportunity. The answer from the clinic was no, that they agreed with cutting the position. In this example we asked probing questions that provided information used to make a decision, rather than simply accept a subjective opinion. Equally important is that the clinic came around to see it that way too, instead of some bean counters at the top.

If critical thinking skills are lacking in many graduates, how can students better attain those skills? One way is practice. Case studies and real-world projects incorporated into the curriculum can serve as opportunities to sift through information to determine what is meaningful and what is not toward making a decision. (continued on page 2).

NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS

5 Part Series: Key Competencies within the MHA Program

Updates and Announcements

Kelli’s Corner

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Important Dates

Registration Ends
Spring 2: March 3, 2024

Term 1 and Spring Break: February 19-March 1

Spring 2
Begins: March 4, 2024
Last day to add/drop: March 8, 2024
Last day to withdraw: March 15, 2024

Practice synthesizing the data inform your decision. Another way is to develop multiple courses of action that demonstrates you considered multiple alternatives prior to making a recommendation. Critical thinking is not always innate and can get better with practice.



UPDATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The eligibility application for The Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education (CAHME) Accreditation was submitted and approved. The MHA Program is approved to submit its Application for Candidacy on August 15, 2024.

Ms. Williams and Dr. Goodspeed will be at the NCHA (North Carolina Healthcare Association) meeting in Cary, North Carolina this month. If you are attending, please stop by for a visit.

For all current and potential Healthcare Administration students, if you want to gain professional development experience, network, or view internship opportunities, we recommend (optional only) you join the American Colleges of Healthcare Executives (ACHE). Information and prices of student membership is included here: <https://www.ache.org/membership#Levels>.

Dr. Scott Goodspeed, Program Director, updated the MHA Mission and Vision statements with the help of faculty and the Congdon School of Health Sciences Leadership. These better reflect our fundamental purpose and preferred future. Your thoughts and comments are always welcome. Below are the updated statements.

Mission

The mission of the High Point University Master of Healthcare Administration Program is to prepare early career healthcare professionals with practical leadership skills, mentorship, critical thinking, and decision-making capabilities in a convenient online environment to advance their career in healthcare settings.

Vision

The vision of the High Point University Master of Healthcare Administration Program is to educate and prepare the next generation of healthcare leaders by offering an extraordinary education and producing graduates who transform healthcare by solving important and complex problems including health equity, transparency, coverage and cost of care, quality and patient safety, workforce shortages and efficient delivery of care.

KELLI'S CORNER

WITH MARC PROPST

Sometimes the best feedback and advice comes from the students themselves. In this short questionnaire, we hear from MHA student and current Director of Development for Tubman, the non-profit organization helping victims of trauma, Marc Propst.

Out of the classes you have taken so far, is there a class you feel you have benefited from the most? Why?

The Strategic Management in Health Communications class provided benefits outside of healthcare. I used the lessons and ideas to promote strategic management within my work. I partnered with the communications team to build more structure and give new ideas to generate more press and awareness of the agency.

What are you looking forward to most after you graduate from the program?

Two things: first, to be able to sleep and stop schooling for a good long while. The second is to move into a healthcare leadership role and take that move to healthcare.

How has your understanding of the role of healthcare administrators in advocating for patient-centered care evolved during your MHA studies?

During my MHA studies, my understanding of the role of healthcare administrators in advocating for patient-centered care has evolved significantly. Initially, I viewed healthcare administrators primarily as managers responsible for overseeing the operational aspects of healthcare organizations. However, as I get deeper into the program, I have come to realize that their role extends far beyond management duties. I had a thing where I didn't want to just be sitting behind a desk doing a bunch of paperwork, and I wanted to be in the mix, hands on. I realized that healthcare administrators play a crucial role in promoting and implementing patient-centered care within organizations. I have recognized the importance of collaboration among different departments or units within healthcare organizations to achieve patient-centered care. Healthcare administrators must build bridges between clinical staff, support services, and quality improvement teams to ensure a complete approach to patient care.