

# LEAD

# FROM THE FRONT

TYPOGRAPHY: ELENA CERRI

## FOR THE UP-AND-COMERS BY ELAINE VITONE



Flaherty



Hogan



Jonassaint

Be-coming a doctor means staying in school through the 23rd grade—that’s the joke physician Sarah Flaherty likes to tell little kids. But for health care pros whose sights are set on leadership, even after all those years in the classroom and the clinic, there’s still plenty more to learn.

Last winter, when Flaherty came on as chair of emergency medical services at UPMC McKeesport, she realized she wanted more formal training in management skills and business savvy—things that, most often, docs either learn by doing, or by heading back to school for an MBA. While the latter did sound enticing (“I’m kind of a huge nerd who would go to school forever,” says Flaherty), she realized grades 24 and 25 just wouldn’t be workable, given her day-to-day demands.

Luckily, as Flaherty was mulling this over, a new Pitt program was in the hopper. It’s called Healthcare Leadership and Business Fundamentals (HLBF), a partnership between the School of Medicine and the Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business.

A four-month, 80% asynchronous course of study codesigned by faculty from Pitt Med as well as the Center for Healthcare Management and Center for Executive Education at Katz, HLBF offers professionals from across health care—nurses, pharmacists, physicians, physician-assistants, you name it—training in leadership, team development and

foundational business skills. The curriculum is divided into four modules, each concluding with an in-person wrap-up session by lecturers from across the nation. (HLBF will offer both continuing medical education credits and 2 credits from Katz.)

Among the HLBF co-organizers and faculty members is Macalus V. Hogan, Pitt professor and vice chair of education and residency program director in orthopaedic surgery, who is an MD and an MBA. Five years ago, Hogan benefitted from a smaller, physician-only program called the Marshall W. Webster Physician Leadership Program.

“It really helped me evolve in how I worked with others and problem-solved,” he says. Hogan went on to be a part of the first Executive MBA in Healthcare cohort at Katz. He looks forward to bringing a similarly enriching experience to the new program, which began in January.

Pitt is the perfect place to do this, Hogan says. “I’ve always said to my residents, ‘Every dynamic of health care is playing out right here in Pittsburgh. Care delivery, innovation, it’s all here.’

“Pitt should lead from the front, because we’re living it every day.”

There’s room to personalize HLBF student experiences, says another co-organizer, Naudia Jonassaint, an MD and MHS who is associate dean for clinical affairs and associate

professor of medicine, as well as the Department of Medicine’s first vice chair for diversity, equity and inclusion.

This can even be done for whole groups of health care pros enrolling together, she says. “We can create cohort-specific experiences, so that enrollees can apply what they’re learning to a given problem.”

Or, maybe you’ve already come up with a great solution to the problem, but now the stumbling block is buy-in.

“There’s a science to bringing people through the process of thought-change,” says Jonassaint. “Understanding what the dynamics are, and how you use those dynamics to create a shift in group think, is really important.” (She adds that Katz’s David Lebel, PhD associate professor of business administration, will be just the person to teach it.)

One thing Flaherty’s looking forward to as she heads back to school is learning how best to support a diverse physician workforce. Most of the docs on her staff are either early career or later career; she’s one of very few in the middle:

“These groups have very different needs. I’m hoping I can maximize what’s helpful for each of these populations. Medicine is a team sport.” ■

**For more information:**  
[executiveprograms@katz.pitt.edu](mailto:executiveprograms@katz.pitt.edu)