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Ochsner Health and Xavier University Announce Two New Graduate Degree Programs

Genetic Counseling and Health Informatics programs will be offered to students in collaboration with the Ochsner Xavier Institute for Health Equity & Research

NEW ORLEANS – [Ochsner Health](#) and [Xavier University of Louisiana](#) have announced the commitment to develop two new graduate degree programs—genetic counseling and health informatics.

Genetic counseling and health informatics programs will be offered to students through classroom instruction at Xavier and clinical rotations at Ochsner Health facilities will be offered to genetic counseling students. Xavier will be the first university in Louisiana to offer a genetic counseling training program and the only such program based at a Historically Black College University (HBCU).

Genetic counselors advise individuals and families affected by or at risk for genetic disorders and support them in making informed healthcare decisions. Health informatics professionals identify, capture, organize and interpret health data to develop effective healthcare processes and solutions, subsequently improving the delivery of healthcare services.

“The development of these programs reflects Xavier honoring our mission to strive for a more just and humane society through education,” **said Dr. Anne McCall, provost, and senior vice president for academic affairs, Xavier University of LA.** “Instead of focusing simply on treatment in health and medicine, we are prioritizing healthcare and research in preventive medicine. Xavier has been a leader in serving and overcoming health disparities for almost a century and we, as leaders in education, science and health, are proud to work with Ochsner to develop these programs.”

Genetic counselors make assessments that can change the lives of patients while health informatics professionals study data and conduct research to make critical discoveries.

“Genetics is a rapidly growing segment in healthcare, especially in oncology and precision medicine. Additionally, with the evolution of technology, there is a critical need for the medical

informatics field, which is the intersection of information science, computer science and health,” said **Leo Seoane, MD, chief academic officer, Ochsner Health**. “We understand there is a critical shortage of genetic counselors and health informatics specialists locally and nationally, especially those who resemble the communities we serve. Through our partnership with Xavier, we are hopeful that these new programs will allow us to educate and employ a diversified workforce as we continue to address health needs in Louisiana.”

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics^[1], the need for genetic counselors is projected to increase 21 percent over the next decade, much faster than the average of other occupations. Recent studies^[2] reveal only 2 percent of genetic counselors currently identify as Black or African American.

In addition to offering new critical educational opportunities, Xavier University, in partnership with Ochsner, is focusing on five key strategies to address health inequity in Louisiana, including preventative medicine and a push toward healthcare reform through the [Ochsner Xavier Institute for Health Equity & Research](#). The initiatives include:

- A focus on outcomes and health service research;
- Workforce development education to create a diverse and inclusive pipeline of healthcare providers and training so that all healthcare providers understand the importance of diversity, inclusion and health equity;
- The development of population health initiatives that focus on healthcare access and ambulatory care quality metrics, and connecting patients with community resources they need outside of healthcare;
- A focus on community engagement, with the Institute hosting events such as health fairs and workforce development opportunities;
- An emphasis on advocacy to work with our government leaders to improve public policy around health.

Both new graduate degree programs are in developmental stages. Ochsner and Xavier plan to announce enrollment information once finalized.

To learn more about Ochsner Health, please visit www.ochsner.org. For more information on Xavier University of Louisiana degree programs, please visit www.xula.edu.

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About Ochsner Health

Ochsner Health is a system that delivers health to the people of Louisiana, Mississippi and the Gulf South with a mission to Serve, Heal, Lead, Educate and Innovate. Ochsner Health is a not-for-profit committed to giving back to the communities it serves through preventative screenings, health and wellness resources and partnerships with innovative organizations that share our vision. Ochsner Health healed more than 876,000 people from across the globe in 2019, providing the latest medical breakthroughs and therapies, including digital medicine for chronic conditions and telehealth specialty services. Ochsner

Health is a national leader, named the top hospital in Louisiana and a top children's hospital by U.S. News & World Report. As Louisiana's leading healthcare educator, Ochsner Health and its partners educate thousands of healthcare professionals annually. Ochsner Health is innovating healthcare by investing in new technologies and research to make world-class care more accessible, affordable, convenient and effective. Ochsner's team of more than 26,000 employees and 4,500 providers are working to reinvent the future of health and wellness in the region. To learn more about Ochsner Health, please visit www.ochsner.org. To transform your health, please visit www.ochsner.org/healthyyou.

About Xavier University of Louisiana

Being America's only historically Black and Catholic University is only the first among many distinctions that have set Xavier University of Louisiana apart for more than nine decades. Despite its relatively small size (3,300 students), Xavier is a nationally recognized leader in the STEM and the health sciences, producing more African American students who graduate from medical schools each year than any other university in the United States. Its College of Pharmacy is among the top producers of African American pharmacists.

Its liberal arts-based programs in such areas as art, business, education, psychology, and political science – as well as recent additions in bioinformatics, data science, neuroscience, crime and social justice, and jazz studies – offer students an unbeatable combination of traditional classroom study, hands-on research, service-learning opportunities, and life experiences. The winning Xavier formula to provide students with a well-balanced curriculum and an environment that nurtures their intellect and feeds their souls.

For more information about Xavier University of Louisiana, visit us online at www.xula.edu or follow us on Facebook, YouTube, or Twitter @XULA1925. To book interviews and/or to speak with our experts in the field of pharmacy, education, premed, public health, science, technology, math, business, English, communications, and the arts, contact Lance Sumler at (504) 520-5240 or lsumler@xula.edu.

[1] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes299092.htm#nat>

[2] National Society of Genetic Counselors, <https://www.nsgc.org/Portals/0/Docs/Policy>