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More than Medicine

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School of Education and Health Sciences

MORE THAN MEDICINE

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More than Medicine

On the fifth floor of Fitz Hall, the next generation of Physician Assistants is learning not only how to care for patients through medical practice, but also how to care about them through the Marianist spirit.

These students are part of the new Department of Physician Assistant Education, which launched in fall 2014 with a Master of Physician Assistant Practice (MPAP) program. The program just enrolled its second cohort and now welcomes a total of 65 students.

The program consists of a 27-month, seven-semester, modular-based curriculum and was granted Accreditation-Provisional status by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA).

The department's mission statement is "to produce physician assistants who are committed to the service of the human person through the skillful, compassionate and ethical provision of health care within the context of the Catholic Marianist



tradition.”

Sue Wulff, founding chair and director, emphasized how the department upholds the Marianist philosophy in all that they do.

When assessing potential students, the Admission Committee considers the whole person: admission is not based on GPA alone. “While the first things we evaluate are undergraduate GPA scores and science prerequisites, we then look deeper into their volunteer and clinical experience. We conduct personal interviews of appropriate candidates before making a final admission decision.”

The program is highly competitive; nearly 800 applications were submitted last year for 35 seats, a number Wulff expects to surpass in 2016.

The faculty and staff are another crucial part of a successful program. Hiring decisions are based on assessments of the whole individual as well as their experience in the medical field and perceived contribution to the program’s collaborative culture. Candidates demonstrate their teaching abilities through presentations and interviews with students.

The faculty includes Sue Wulff; Dr. Molly Middleton, Medical Director and clinical faculty; Lindsey Hammett, Director of Didactic Education; Kelli Huesman, Director of Clinical Education; Kathleen Fischer, clinical faculty; Andrea Knapke, clinical faculty; and Amy Kidwell, senior administrative secretary. All faculty are PAs except for Dr. Middleton, who is a board certified family practice physician. “Teamwork is so important, and we have a great team here working very well together,” Wulff said. This emphasis on teamwork is a direct reflection of the department’s mission, which includes not only learning about the medical diseases that affect patients, but learning and caring about the patient as a whole person.



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The facilities provided for student training are conducive preparation for real-world situations. There are two classrooms, ten exam rooms, and two simulation rooms, one designed as a mock operating room and the other as a mock emergency room. Much of the equipment and technology in these simulation rooms are found in hospitals and physician offices.

The cases used in simulation mimic real life patient encounters. Computerized simulations allow students to practice various situations like birthing a child with a simulated woman or resuscitating a cardiac arrest (heart attack) on a simulated man.

Standardized patients are “actors” from the community who are willing to help PA students learn the art of medicine. The standardized patients are trained to work from scripted material while interacting with students. Part of the students’ interactions include personal introductions, taking the medical history, conducting the physical examination and writing problem assessments and suggested treatment(s). Department chair Wulff anticipates that students working with simulations and standardized patients will be well prepared to work with real patients when they begin their clinical experience in hospitals and physician offices.



Although the program is new, students have expressed their appreciation for the collaborative environment and how receptive the faculty has been to feedback on classes, books and the program in general. Denny Mudd, a second year student, said students are able to meet with Ms. Wulff or other faculty members anytime with questions or concerns. "It's nice to be able to communicate directly with the director of the program, have our thoughts heard and know how much she cares about the success of the program," he said.

Moving forward, Wulff would like to see the program grow. "It's not just about the numbers," she said, "but about growing a community of physician assistants that are out there representing UD well and providing quality patient care to the community."

By Erin Callahan '15, edited by Sue Wulff and Kathy Fischer

Check out our PA students at work!

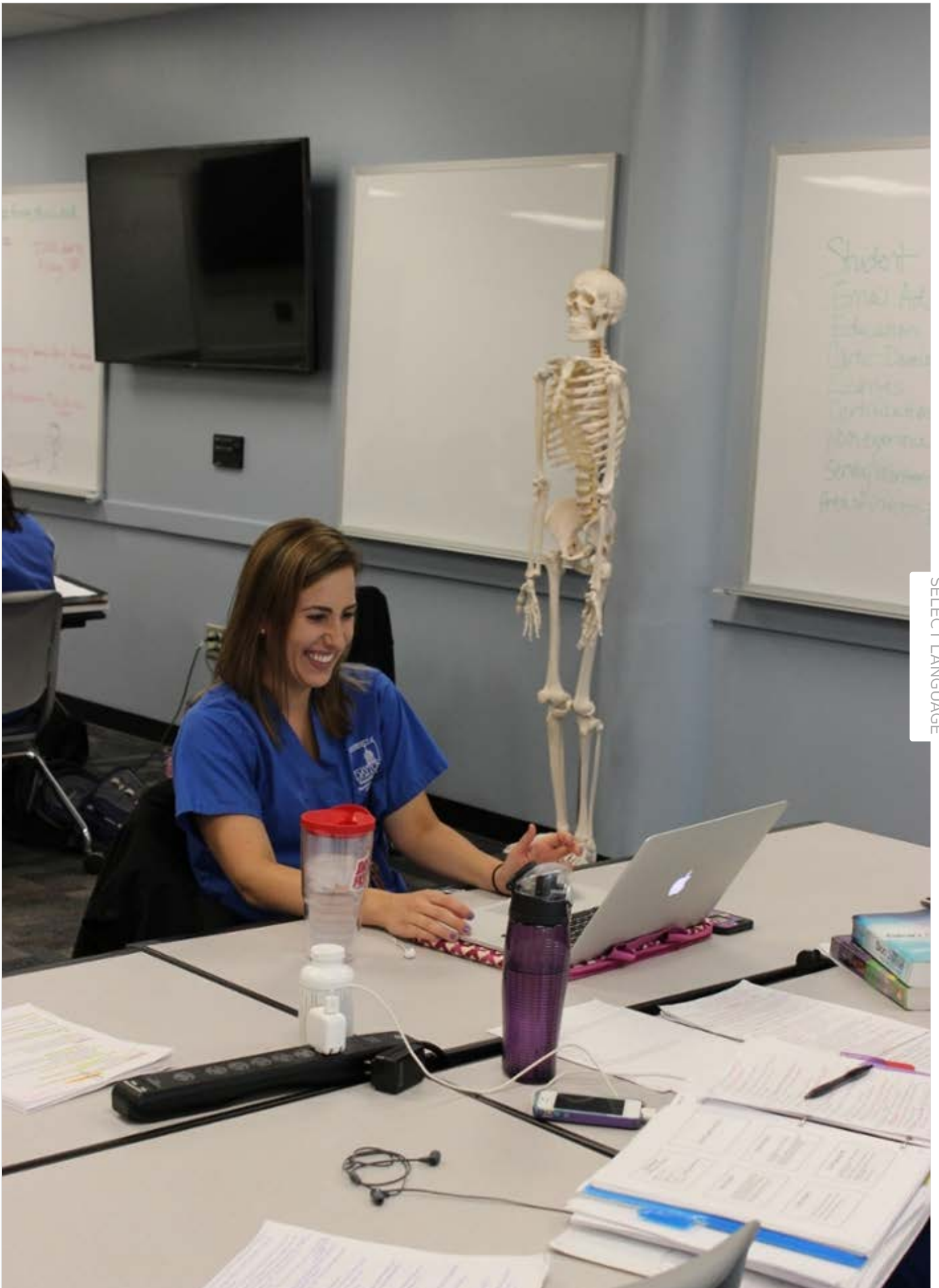


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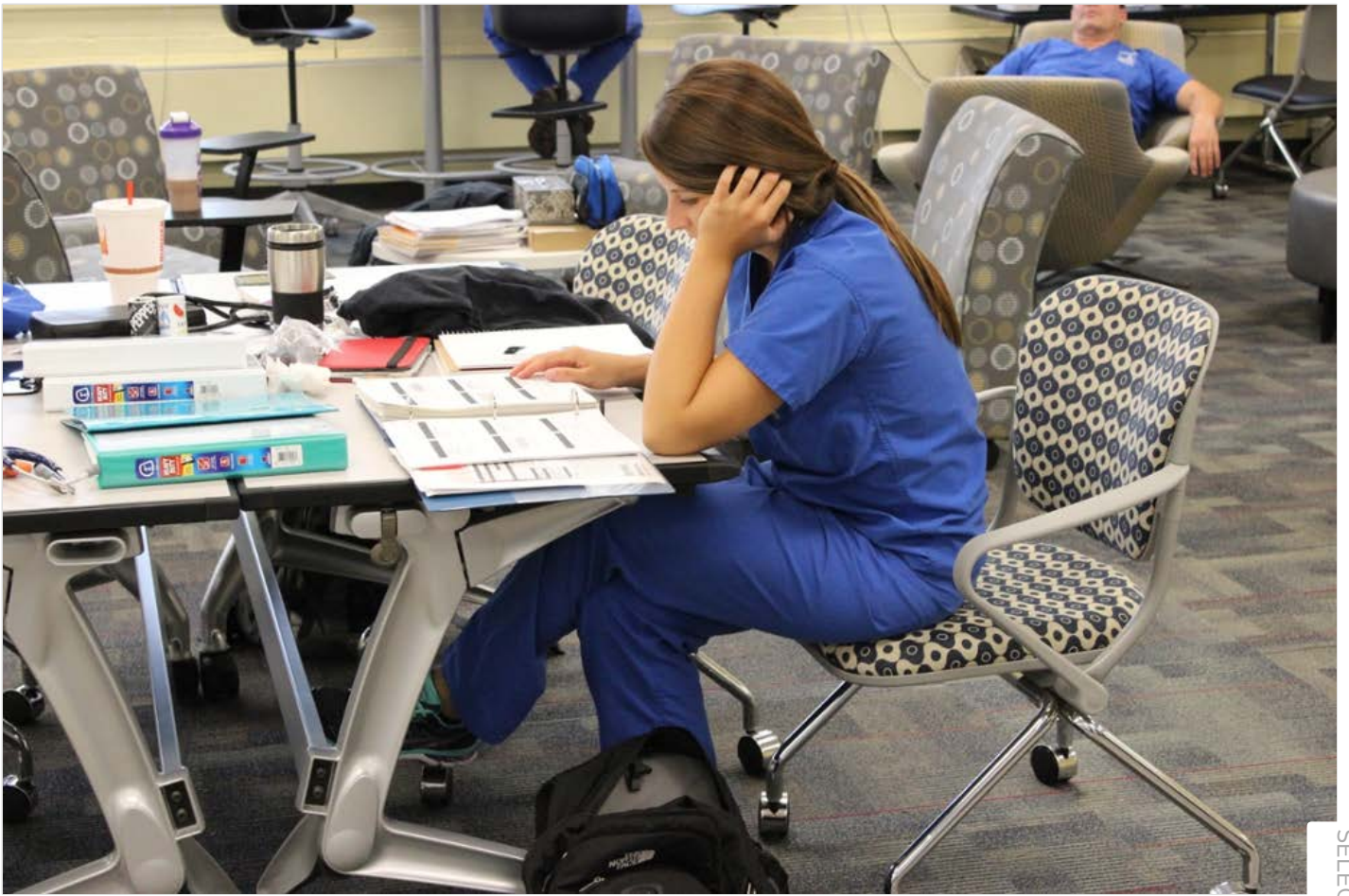


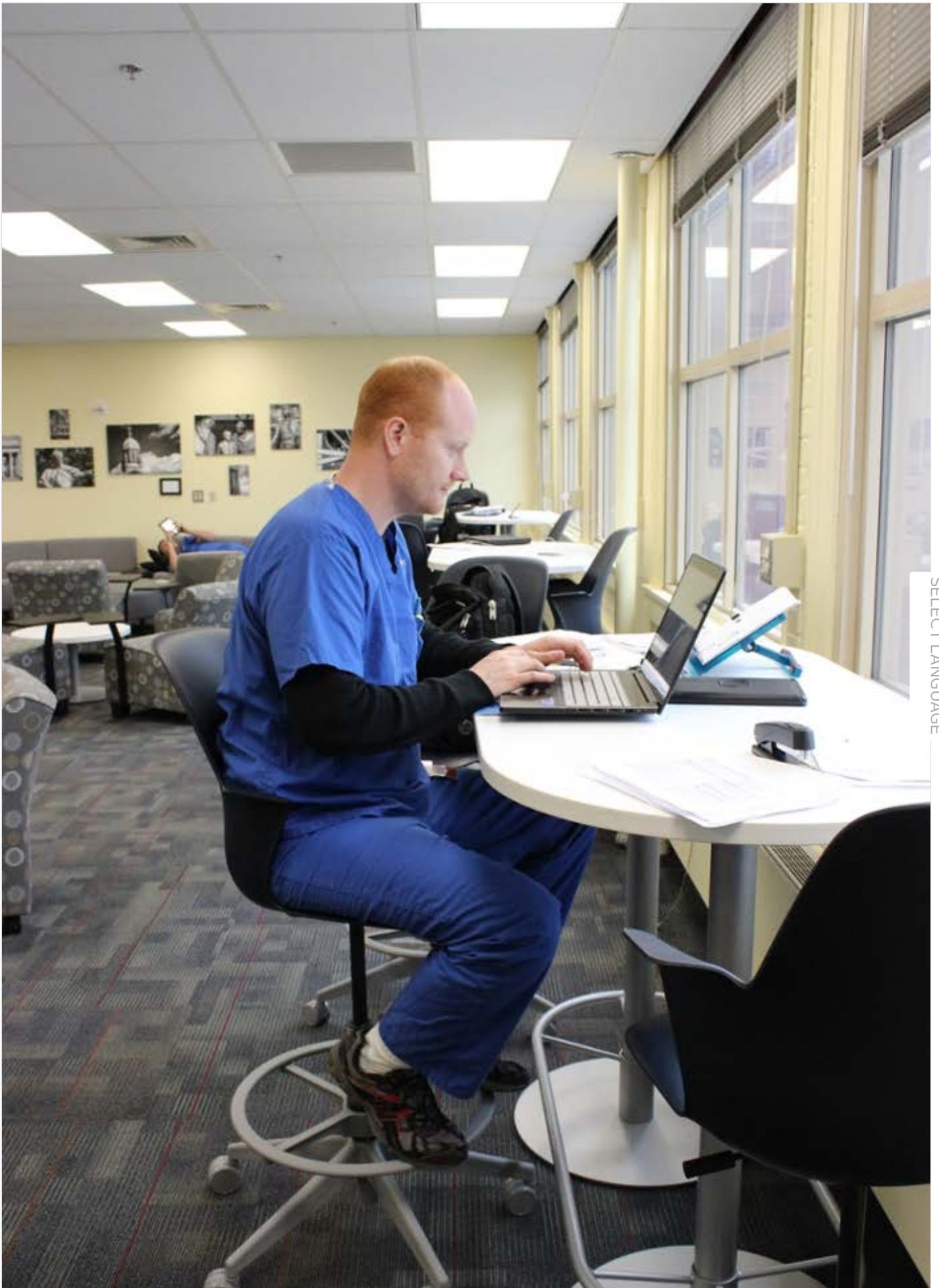


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