

UMKC Physician Assistant Program Expands to Columbia

THE UMKC SCHOOL OF MEDICINE'S physician assistant program is expanding to a second location in Columbia, Missouri, in January 2026.

The UMKC Master of Medical Science Physician Assistant Program is a seven-semester program with one of the smaller cohort sizes in the country at 20 students.

"It's desirable to have that (size)," said Eric Johnson, program director. "We knew that if we were going to (grow), we'd still want the feel of a small cohort."

A satellite location offered a way to expand the program without sacrificing cohort size.

"The University of Missouri approached us about opening a program, and we saw an opportunity to collaborate,"

Johnson said. "It allows both of our medical schools to share resources, support students and address workforce shortages, especially in rural areas surrounding Columbia."

The Columbia site will enroll 10 students this January, growing to 20 by 2028. Students and faculty will be housed at MU's School of Medicine, which is also where students will receive coursework and where faculty offices will be. Faculty on both campuses will teach all students in the collective cohort, with some lessons occurring virtually. UMKC has hired a professor for the Columbia location, with plans to hire four new faculty members in total. The accreditation body met at the end of June and approved the expansion with no citations.

"We're grateful for the collaboration," Johnson said. "This is a big step forward for the program and the communities we serve."
