

## Larner College of Medicine Branch Campus at Western Connecticut Health Network (WCHN)

### FAQs

#### 1. *What is a Branch Campus:*

Many medical schools have established Branch (or Regional) Campuses that place students in communities with characteristics different than that of the main campus. Of the typical four years of med school education, Branch Campus experiences may range between 1-3 years but usually include the core clinical clerkships. These campuses often have distinct “themes” and their own schedules but must offer education objectives and outcomes that are comparable to the main campus.

#### 2. *What are the features of the Western Connecticut Health Network (WCHN) University of Vermont (UVM) Branch Campus?*

a) Western Connecticut Health Network serves a population of approximately 600,000 spread across 28 communities in western Connecticut. The system is comprised of three Hospitals (Danbury, Norwalk and New Milford) with 800 in-patient beds, over 70 community clinical sites and over 1,000 practitioners employed by or affiliated with the network. There are residencies in Internal Medicine, General Surgery, OB/GYN, Pathology and Radiology and Fellowships in Cardiology, Gastroenterology, Pulmonary/Critical Care and Sleep Medicine.

b) The population served by WCHN is a remarkably diverse blend of patients from a wide spectrum of economic, educational and ethnic backgrounds. Over 30 languages and dialects are spoken in the homes of students attending Danbury and Norwalk public schools. In addition to its own large network of community physicians, WCHN collaborates with Federally Qualifies Health Clinics and Americares Free Clinics in both Norwalk and Danbury. We believe that medical students get better training and learn a deeply engrained empathy for the patients when their clinical training takes place in such a diverse milieu.

c) Western Connecticut is the home of the WCHN/UVM Global Health program. The program is administered here and visiting students and physicians from our international sister sites spend time here as part of an exchange program. UVM students will have the opportunity to interact with our international visitors, as well as to participate in Global Health electives abroad.

d) Our proximity to New York City to the south and proximity to rural Litchfield County and the Hudson River region to the north offers an impressive array of cultural and free-time activities to students.

3. *How does the Branch Campus relate to the main campus?*

From each UVM medical school class, 35 students will attend the Branch Campus. The entire class will start their education in Burlington and will complete the first 18 months of the “Foundations” curriculum there. After taking the first part of the US medical licensing exam (USMLE Step 1), the 35 students will move to the western Connecticut area and complete their clinical training (“Core Clerkships and “Advanced Integration”). Identical curricular material and electronic resources will be used at both the WCHN and the main campus will be used.

4. *How are WCHN Branch Campus students selected?*

We anticipate that interested students will self select the WCHN campus. During the UVM LCOM admissions process, you will have the opportunity to indicate your interest in being part of the WCHN Branch Campus. We will arrange a tour and an introduction to that campus for interested students.

5. *For which students is the Branch Campus the best choice?*

The WCHN Branch campus should appeal to students for whom training in a community setting is important and are interested in the relationship between Community Health, Public Health and Global Health. Many rotations offer the opportunity to work directly with attending physicians with observed hand on clinical responsibility. Students who might have personal or family reasons to be in the Connecticut/NYC area, and independent learners with strong problem-solving abilities will also be specially suited for this campus. Finally, since UVM’s global health program is centered at WCHN, many students will find the global health opportunities of particular interest.

6. *Where will I live if I elect to go to the Branch Campus?*

While all students, regardless of campus, are responsible for arranging their own housing in Burlington during the “Foundations” period, once in Connecticut, the staff at WCHN will assist you in finding suitable housing in Connecticut. The teaching hospitals are in Norwalk and Danbury; about 24 miles apart. We will provide you with lists of apartment complexes and rentals accessible to the hospitals and information about the communities in this area.

7. *What is the clinical experience like at WCHN?*

There is a population of almost 600,000 individuals living in the 28 communities that comprise the primary catchment area for WCHN this is similar to the population in the state of Vermont. With more than 70 community-based practices (both primary and specialty care), over 800 in-patient beds spread over three hospitals and three busy Emergency Rooms, there is a wide variety of clinical experiences available to medical students. Below are the 2016 data reflecting the in-patient clinical activities of WCHN:

	<b>Beds</b>	<b>Annual Discharges</b>	<b>ED Visits</b>
<b>Danbury / New Milford Hospitals</b>	456	20,846	85,028
<b>Norwalk Hospital</b>	366	12,660	49,455

Community hospitals provide a rich educational environment during clinical training as patients often seek their initial care for complex conditions within a community health system, allowing students to hone their diagnostic skills. The community hospital setting affords students the opportunity to see both uncomplicated medical cases but also very complex subspecialty care. During the *Advanced Integration* final phase of medical school students can focus elective months in subspecialist areas of interest.

8. *How does the Branch Campus curriculum and schedule compare to those at the main campus?*

The WCHN curriculum is the same as the curriculum at the main campus in most ways: the seven core clerkships (In-patient Internal Medicine, Surgery, Pediatrics, Neurology, Family Medicine, Psychiatry, and Out-patient Internal Medicine.), the educational goals and the end-of-clerkship examinations are the same at both campuses. The curriculum at WCHN will emphasize involvement in community health and Global Health in an effort to give students a keen awareness of the challenges of providing healthcare in complex communities, both domestically and internationally.

The “Advanced Integration” phase of the schedule will be the same at WCHN as the Burlington campus. From mid-March until the end of April the next year, students will complete 48 weeks of required and elective opportunities in clinical, research and teaching activities just like students at the main campus.

Regardless of campus, all educational activities will emphasize active learning. Our students will stand out as being fully engaged in and reflective about the ways they learn in a variety of settings.

The Clinical Clerkships and the Advance Integration will begin and end on the same dates at WCHN as the Burlington Campus. WCHN students will have the same dates for vacation. The actual week-to-week schedule of “Clinical Clerkship” will vary slightly from the main campus.