

M.D./M.P.H. Orientation Returns to Campus to Welcome the Class of 2026

Excited, stressed, and a bit nervous: These were just some of the emotions felt by students attending the in-person Class of 2026 M.D./M.P.H. orientation at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. After two years of holding orientations virtually, this special segment returned to campus on June 27 to welcome 52 aspiring physicians to the M.P.H. portion of their medical education journey.



Miller School faculty members with the M.D./M.P.H. Class of 2026.

"These are the perfect mix of emotions to have," said Latha Chandran, M.D., M.P.H., executive dean and founding chair of the Department of Medical Education at the Miller School. "You are in good hands here but understand the journey to being an M.D. is difficult. We are here to help start your medical career. Come with your full energy, and you will receive outstanding results."



Heartfelt Welcome

Julio Frenk, M.D., M.P.H., Ph.D., president of the University of Miami, led the opening remarks and emphasized the interconnectivity between the two degrees.

"Every effective doctor must master both the content and context of his or her practice," President Frenk said. "By choosing this joint degree, you are deliberately integrating health at the individual and population levels. I am excited to welcome all of you to what I know will be a rewarding career."



Henri R. Ford, M.D., M.H.A., welcomes the new cohort.

Henri R. Ford, M.D., M.H.A., dean and chief academic officer of the Miller School, also shared words of wisdom, highlighting the NextGenMD and public health curricula while emphasizing how COVID-19 intensified the significance of public health careers.

"It is our intent with this curriculum to make sure you can impact not just your own patients' lives, but those on a global scale," Dean Ford said. "The pandemic has underscored

the importance of public health measures, and we at the Miller School are truly dedicated to your success."



Rebecca Soistmann

This dedication was further echoed in welcome speeches by faculty members in the program and other leaders at the Miller School. All speakers emphasized the support system that is in place and urged students to reach out when they need assistance. Rebecca Soistmann, a first-year M.D./M.P.H student, has experienced this firsthand since she applied to the program.

"I chose Miller because I felt cared for by the faculty and current students throughout my application process, and could sense that this school is deeply devoted to collaboration and community building," Soistmann said. "At orientation, I was thrilled to see those traits exemplified in my peers and the whole staff. This joint degree will allow us all to learn how to care not just for individual patients but whole communities throughout our future medical practices, and I'm so excited to get started."



By the Numbers



Richard Weisman, Pharm.D., announces the statistics of the M.D./M.P.H. Class of 2026

Richard Weisman, Pharm.D., associate dean for admissions and enrollment and professor of pediatrics, shared the Class of 2026 statistics. Of the more than 11,000 applicants to the Miller School, 436 applied to the M.D./M.P.H. program, and 52 students were ultimately accepted into the program.

The dual-degree cohort comprises 60% women, 48% minorities, and 13.5% underrepresented populations – underscoring the Miller School's commitment to diversifying the face of medicine. The class also has varied degree backgrounds, ranging from sciences to the arts and even law, and students hail from around the nation and world, including countries such as India, Italy, Korea, and Nigeria.



Kyle Edwards

Apart from the academic and geographical differences, each student has a personal journey that led them to pursue a joint degree. Kyle Edwards' motivation to study cancer epidemiology and inequities in global cancer care stemmed from watching his mother battle the disease.

"Orientation reaffirmed the reasons I chose to attend UM," Edwards said. "I have come to recognize that health care extends far beyond the walls of the exam room. For this reason, I decided to pursue the dual M.D./M.P.H. program while intending to research these cancer topics for my M.P.H. capstone and throughout my medical career."





M.D./M.P.H. Class of 2026

The event also featured summaries of the course schedules with introductions from Student Services and the Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement. Faculty members acquainted students with the Department of Public Health Sciences, and the event concluded with current students in the program offering advice and answering questions about being a dual-degree student.

"We have a good composite of students that will add to the chemistry of the class," Dr. Weisman said. "We spent a lot of time in admissions selecting the best fit for the program, and we know you are the best of the best. Best wishes, and make us proud."

Orientation photo gallery is available [here](#).

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