

A Roadmap and Preparedness for a Successful Transition from a Division to a Department: The University of Arizona Dermatology Case.

Clara Curiel-Lewandrowski. University of Arizona, College of Medicine.

Mentors: Michael Abecassis, MD - Dean, UA College of Medicine-Tucson, and Michael Dake, MD - VP, UA Health Sciences.

Significance of the Project

The UA/Banner Dermatology Division has a unique opportunity to be Arizona's primary academic dermatological practice. There is an acute demand for cutting-edge dermatological clinical care, specialized multidisciplinary programs, and access to clinical trials, yet >98% of care is currently provided by private practice groups lacking these resources.

Transitioning the UA/Banner Dermatology Division to a Department will accelerate the impact of the program and address the community's needs. A department status will provide dermatology with a closer engagement in the medical school's strategic planning, decisions, and necessary budgetary support. This step is critical since the current infrastructure is not conducive for the dermatology program to achieve its full potential.

A strategic roadmap with institutional alignment and supportive resources can transform access to academic dermatological care.

Purpose of the Project

Transitioning the UA Dermatology Division into a Department is a multistep and multiyear initiative. This project aims to successfully establish the roadmap to achieving our proposed goals by the Fall of 2024. Having a clear understanding of the institutional administrative and regulatory process, the role of multiple stakeholders, and financial requirements will allow us to build a common vision, timeline, and alignment among all parties.

Methods of the Project

To establish a successful roadmap, the following steps were undertaken:

1. Complete a comprehensive SWOT analysis of the Division
2. Create a vision document detailing the opportunities, strategic plan for expansion, timeline, and budget.
3. Understand the institutional process to route the request and the expected timeline
4. Meet with the stakeholders and authorities involved in the approval process
5. Interview Division Chiefs at the institution that have successfully achieved Department status in the last five years
6. Interview Dermatology Division Chiefs across the country that have successfully achieved Department status in the last three years
7. Identify leading barriers and potential solutions to achieve the proposed objective

Results to Date

We have completed the steps mentioned above, leading to the following findings:

1. Strong justification for Dermatology to be an independent Department given a separate board certification is required in the US and 68% of the programs nationwide currently hold a Department status.
2. There is an overwhelming agreement and alignment concerning the vision and strategic expansion of the Dermatology Department among the leadership of the Division, Department of Medicine, College of Medicine-Tucson, UA Health Sciences, and from the president's office

3. The identified clinical and translational research opportunities include: cutaneous oncology, complex dermatology, laser/aesthetics, and wound healing. In basic science: Immunobiology and non-invasive imaging of the skin
4. The identified barriers (B) and solutions (S) to meet the proposed timeline include:
 - B: There is a need to expand the administrative support to process requests and achieve timely approvals. S: A full-time Division Manager has been approved for posting to support the transition
 - B: Extreme delays in obtaining approval for faculty postings. S: A request to expedite the approval has been granted for selected positions

Discussion and Conclusions

The creation of a Department of Dermatology at UA represents an opportunity to achieve our vision of delivering the best possible dermatological care to our patients, advancing education and increasing scholarship.