



**KERN NATIONAL NETWORK**  
FOR FLOURISHING IN MEDICINE  
*Character. Caring. Practical Wisdom.*

## **Kern National Network for Flourishing in Medicine (KNN) Announces Nine U.S. Medical Schools Will Participate in a National Demonstration Project to Advance Open Inquiry and Respectful Discourse in Academic Medicine**

April 12, 2024

The [Kern National Network for Flourishing in Medicine \(KNN\)](#) announced today a cohort of nine U.S. medical schools that will participate in a national demonstration project aimed at identifying innovative, effective methods and resources for bridging across differences and overcoming polarization in academic medicine:

- Duke University School of Medicine
- Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth
- Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences at University of Buffalo–SUNY
- Paul L. Foster School of Medicine at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center–El Paso
- Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania
- Pritzker School of Medicine at the University of Chicago
- University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health
- Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine
- Wake Forest University School of Medicine

Building on the work of Robert D. Putnam, PhD, the KNN approaches bridging as a facilitative process that advances flourishing by providing a model for engaging across groups and individuals with different views on topics, including those impacting the health ecosystem and patient care.

The KNN recognizes that effectively addressing issues of divisiveness and polarization will require a commitment to advance solutions and support a culture and environment in which faculty, staff and learners can flourish. Selected schools expressed a deep commitment to bridging differences in clinical learning environments, and the cohort also reflects a broad range of geographic settings, institution types and learner populations.

“The schools within this impressive cohort share a passion and vision for creating learning environments where it is possible to engage with other viewpoints and approach disagreements with a spirit of respect, curiosity and courage,” said Cheryl A. Maurana, PhD, MCW Eminent Scholar, Senior Vice President for Academic Partnerships, Professor of Bioethics and Medical Humanities at the Medical College of Wisconsin and Founding Director of the KNN. “It is a privilege to work alongside these institutions to foster respectful dialogue that will strengthen our medical schools and healthcare systems, as well as revitalize our communities and society more broadly.”

This demonstration project effort is made possible by the support of a three-year board grant from the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation that began in January 2024, as well as support from the Kern Family Foundation.

A strong partnership with the Constructive Dialogue Institute (CDI), a national leader in bridging methods, further underpins the national demonstration project. The KNN and CDI have collaborated to develop the *Perspectives for*

*Academic Medicine* curriculum, a version of CDI's successful *Perspectives* curriculum that is tailored to the needs of medical schools.

*Perspectives for Academic Medicine* contains six lessons, including modules such as “Cultivating Intellectual Humility” and “Exploring Worldviews.” It also integrates activities and peer-to-peer discussions in which learners can practice acquired skills with a conversation partner. With support from senior leaders, each school will apply the curriculum within its institution — with the aim of equipping faculty, learners and staff with the skills and tools needed to find strength in different perspectives and collectively work together to solve pressing challenges in the field.

The medical school demonstration project effort is one vital component of the broader, multipronged KNN Bridging Across Differences Toward Flourishing Initiative ([Bridging Initiative](#)). Undergirded by a [framework](#) of character, caring, practical wisdom and flourishing, the Bridging Initiative is designed to address bridging across structure, relationships, culture and power dynamics. This initiative is led by Cheryl A. Maurana, PhD, with co-leadership provided by Christine K. Cassel, MD, MACP, Professor at the University of California San Francisco School of Medicine and Sue M. Cox, MD, Associate Dean, Accreditation, Strategy and Quality Improvement at the University of Texas at Tyler School of Medicine.

The KNN Bridging Initiative will help shift culture in the profession of medicine, deepening appreciation for diverse perspectives and a willingness to listen and engage with different viewpoints. Practicing and refining bridging approaches will enhance medical education, patient-physician trust and care delivery — creating respectful, inclusive healthcare environments in which all can flourish.

###

### [About the Kern National Network for Flourishing in Medicine](#)

The Kern National Network for Flourishing in Medicine (KNN) is a movement focused on integrating four foundational elements within the profession of medicine: character, caring, practical wisdom and flourishing. The KNN advances this work by connecting and convening stakeholders across the health ecosystem, catalyzing transformative initiatives, and influencing policy and systems change toward healthier, positive organizational cultures. Funding for the KNN is provided through a generous investment from the Kern Family Foundation and additional support.

**Inquiries:** [knn@mcw.edu](mailto:knn@mcw.edu)

### [About the Constructive Dialogue Institute \(CDI\)](#)

Co-founded in 2017 by psychologist Jonathan Haidt and Caroline Mehl, the Constructive Dialogue Institute (CDI) is a non-profit organization that builds educational tools to equip Americans with the skills to communicate and collaborate across differences. To accomplish this goal, CDI translates the latest behavioral science research into educational resources that are evidence-based, practical, and scalable for institutions, educators, and communities.

### [About the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation](#)

The Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation is the only national foundation dedicated solely to improving the education of health professionals. The Foundation's guiding principle is that health professional education has at its core a strong social mission: to serve the public's needs and improve the health of the public.