The mission of Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine is to mentor and educate students to become exceptional, compassionate and innovative physicians, educators and researchers. We expect our students to be inquiry-driven team leaders who will serve patients, society and the profession.

The Feinberg School embarked on a broad renewal of its Doctor of Medicine educational program in fall 2009, to develop a learner-focused, competency-based curriculum designed to leverage our students’ experiences and expertise, provide flexibility for their professional development and maximize their potential. The first of the three-phase program launched in the 2012-13 academic year.

Here we share the basic structure, elements and organizing principles of the curriculum. For more information, please visit the following link: http://www.feinberg.northwestern.edu/education/curriculum/index.html.
The fully integrated curriculum utilizes four major elements (in bold) and five essential “threads” (in blue). Each phase incorporates content from all of these important building blocks in different concentrations.

Clinical Medicine focuses on the development of clinical skills, including communication and physical examination, as well as the collection and evaluation of information from a patient.

- Prevention, Diagnosis, Treatment, Rehabilitation
  - Prevention includes nutrition, behavioral change, wellness
  - Diagnosis includes History & Physical Examination, laboratory medicine, imaging
  - Treatment includes therapeutics and technical skills
  - Rehab includes transitions of care
  - Palliation includes end-of-life care

Medical Decision-Making & Clinical Reasoning
- MDM includes information acquisition and management, evidence-based medicine, cost-effective care
- Communication (oral, written, counseling, teaching)

Also included are innovations such as the Focused Clinical Experiences and the Education-Centered Medical Home, which brings together students at different levels of training to learn patient care in an outpatient practice.

Science in Medicine fosters learning in the sciences basic to medicine.

- Foundational sciences (cellular processes, genetics, metabolism, inflammation and infection)
- Normal structure and function
- Mechanisms of disease, diagnosis, therapeutic interventions, prevention
- Organ-based, lifecycle/developmental framework

Health and Society explores ways in which wellness is promoted in a population, including health disparities and outcomes, and the global integration of medicine with societal elements.

- Lifestyle Medicine
- Biopsychosocial determinants of health and disease (Healthy People 2020)
- Health Advocacy and Equity
- Health economics and systems
- Global, community, and public health perspectives
- Patient Safety and Quality Improvement
- Teamwork & Leadership

H&S also includes innovations such as Textbook Chicago, which introduces students to six Chicago communities to assess the determinants of health, perform a health risk appraisal and develop a behavior change plan.

Professional Development includes topics for personal and professional development and allows students to choose and develop an Area of Scholarly Concentration (AoSC). Students immerse themselves in specific themes in research, education, or community service of their own choosing and develop a mentoring relationship with a faculty member.

Other development topics include:
- “Pathways,” professional goals
- Personal awareness and self-care
- Professional behavior, moral reasoning, ethics

Instruction is broken into three phases, the first of which begins with an introduction called the Foundations.

Foundations: a 14-week introductory segment that provides the appropriate background and framework to approach the required curriculum. All curricular elements are part of Foundations.

Moreover, it sets the tone for learning. Specific topics are based on systems, including biochemistry, clinical skills, genetics, microscopic and gross anatomy, molecular biology, pathology, public health, professionalism, etc.

The M1 and M2 years are approached with modules organized by organ systems, covering both normal and abnormal issues. As part of this phase, students participate in Focused Clinical Experiences (FCE), which bring them into the clinical environment to work with healthcare practitioners on real-world examples, ensuring that they can apply their new knowledge across a wide array of subjects. Each FCE is clearly defined with concrete learning objectives to narrow the focus and provide meaningful experiences that increase confidence and build skills.

The M3 year includes intense clinical experiences through a complete set of core clerkships that are department-based and span multiple disciplines. There also is elective time in this phase, allowing students to pursue other clinical interest areas (i.e., anesthesiology, radiology, ophthalmology, dermatology).

The M4 year focuses on advanced clinical rotations as well as completion of work in the AoSC. (An innovative Readiness for Residency program will begin in 2016.)

Throughout these phases, there are periodic Synthesis & Application Modules to review key concepts, relate them to new ones, and assess learning.