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Ponce Health Sciences University celebrates White Coat Ceremony for its first class of students at its School of Medicine in the British Virgin Islands

Release Date: 11 July, 2025



Ponce Health Sciences School (PHSU) held its White Coat Ceremony yesterday to welcome its first class of students at its School of Medicine in the British Virgin Islands (BVI), ahead of the start of the school's Fall 2025 semester.

In the ceremony, 32 students out of a projected class of 40 students including the BVI, Puerto Rico, and the U.S., received their white coats. They swore the Hippocratic Oath during the ceremony, which was held at the H. Lavity Stoutt Community College auditorium in Tortola.

"This White Coat Ceremony not only welcomes our inaugural MD class in Tortola but also underscores the quality and rigor of our four-year Doctor of Medicine curriculum, which has earned preliminary accreditation from the Accreditation Commission on Colleges of Medicine," noted Dr. Gino Natalicchio, president of PHSU. "It also highlights PHSU's commitment to uphold the high standards of the program while expanding access to excellence in medical education."

The Ceremony was attended by notable representatives of the government of the Virgin Islands including Dr. the Honorable Natalio D. Wheatley, premier, Honorable Vincent O. Wheatley, minster of health, Honorable Sharie B. de Castro, minister of education, representatives of the PHSU School of Medicine including Dr. David Lenihan, CEO, Dr. Gino Natalicchio, president, Dr. Anne Peterson, dean, and Dr. J. Daniel Perez, vice president of operations, and parents and relatives of the students, among other participants.

"Inaugurating this school of medicine is very significant because it is a long-desired opportunity to have graduate medical education in the BVI. Students will have the opportunity to learn in our beautiful territory and gain valuable skills that they can use in their own communities," said BVI Premier Dr. the Hon. Natalio D. Wheatley. "We are very excited to welcome the PHSU BVI School of Medicine's first class of students, and we have no doubt they will enjoy their time in the BVI."

"The PHSU BVI School of Medicine reaffirms our commitment to supporting local communities by creating pathways for aspiring physicians to serve and uplift the region," said Dr. E. Anne Peterson, dean of the PHSU BVI School of Medicine. "Through high-quality medical education, we aim to help address healthcare needs

and improve access to care across the islands.”

The BVI School of Medicine is PHSU’s first international site and will award graduate degrees in medicine. The Ponce main campus also awards degrees in clinical psychology, dental medicine, biomedical sciences, medical sciences, public health, and nursing. Overall, the PHSU campuses currently have an enrollment of 2,140 active students served by a faculty of 625 highly regarded faculty members. The university’s research efforts have led to the publication of 735 research papers to date, with 50 peer-reviewed articles published annually. PHSU students have achieved remarkable outcomes, including a 93% board pass rate and a 96% residency match rate for the March 2025 cohort.

The BVI School of Medicine obtained provisional accreditation from the Accreditation Commission on Colleges of Medicine (ACCM), and in 2025, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education accredited this additional location. The Higher Education Licensing Board under the Ministry of Education of the Virgin Islands granted a provisional license and a trade license to operate in the territory.

PHSU is owned and administered by Tiber Health, a St. Louis-based company that seeks to scale and increase access to quality healthcare education. The Ponce campus is licensed by the Puerto Rico Council of Education and accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MS-CHE), the regional accreditor for higher education institutions in Puerto Rico. PHSU’s U.S. programs are also accredited by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME), the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH), the American Psychological Association (APA), the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) for the Bachelor of Science of Nursing program, the Accreditation Council of Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) for residency training, and the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME).

About Ponce Health Sciences University:

Ponce Health Sciences University (PHSU) is a university that focuses on medicine, clinical psychology, biomedical sciences, public health, nursing and dental medicine. Since 1977, it has been forming highly qualified medical professionals in the health field. The university also counts with a university center in San Juan that

offers a Bachelor of Science in Nursing program, a Master in Medical Sciences, a Master's in School Psychology, and a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology. PHSU also has a campus in St. Louis, MO and a new medical school in the British Virgin Islands.

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Gallery







Additional Documents or Media

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