

SIOM Approved for Public Health Degree

Editorial Staff

The Seattle Institute of Oriental Medicine (SIOM) recently received approval from the [Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine](#) (ACAOM) and the state of Washington to offer a master of acupuncture degree (MAOM) with an emphasis in public health. This program will prepare graduates to work in public health facilities, community clinics and international settings where medical services are severely limited. The program trains students to employ acupuncture, dietary therapy, *qi gong*, and bodywork with a focus on applying these skills in locations with few health care resources. More information may be found at the school's Web site (www.siom.edu) for specific program information.

As part of the process of planning this program, the school [requested input from the general public](#) via an article in the November 2009 issue of *Acupuncture Today*. Comments received demonstrated a vast array of perspectives on acupuncture training in this country and closely mirrored the discussion presently going on at the national level regarding the future of the field of Acupuncture and Oriental medicine education.

According to school administrators, input ranged from those who felt the proposed program was still too long and that the hours should be reduced to enable more people to afford the program to the other end of the spectrum, where other respondents opposed the program because it diminished the skills of graduates relative to SIOM's Oriental medicine program. This latter group felt that it was important for SIOM to stand fast in its adherence to its present MAOM program. These respondents also suggested that a better use of school resources would be to put energy into moving the MAOM to a freestanding doctoral degree. Between these two extremes, the largest number of responses indicated support for the program with its focus on the skills needed to work with medically underserved populations and its emphasis on nutrition and bodywork.

Since the SIOM leadership agreed that in meeting current patient needs, it requires both a streamlined acupuncture degree program and a fully-developed freestanding doctoral program, the school chose to proceed with the development of the acupuncture degree. SIOM administrators stated that both the further streamlining of acupuncture programs and the approval of comprehensive doctoral degrees is a matter that has to be resolved at the national level with the [Council of Colleges of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine](#) (CCAOM) and the ACAOM. Individual schools are constrained from proceeding in either direction by the requirements set by these organizations. Nevertheless, SIOM administrators believe that the input received in its master's degree process suggests that national conversations about a more accessible acupuncture degree and a move to a freestanding doctoral program, are both in order to meet the full range of patient and practitioner needs.

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