

December 2025

AACI

Commentary

Needs and Opportunities for Training Cancer Center Administrators

By Jasmine A. Salem, MHA, Barry Sullivan, MHA, Kathleen Dedora, MHA, Karen Charron, MPH, Jamie Bachman, MPA, Mary Armanios, MD



Clockwise from upper left:

Jasmine A. Salem, MHA, Administrator, Office of Cancer Research Training and Education Coordination (CRTEC), Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins University (SKCCC)

Barry Sullivan, MHA, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (JHBSPH) Class of 2025

Kathleen Dedora, MHA, JHBSPH Class of 2025

Karen Charron, MPH, Associate Director, Residency Management and Professional Development, JHBSPH

Jamie Bachman, MPA, Chief Administrator Officer, Cancer Service Line, SKCCC

Mary Armanios, MD, Professor and SKCCC Associate Director for CRTEC

Cancer centers (CC) extend large footprints across academic medical centers (AMC) due to their complex infrastructure and broad research, education, and outreach missions, in addition to patient care. To support their intricate operations, CC administrators facilitate synergy and prioritize the use of increasingly limited resources. The NCI's Cancer Center Support Grant (CCSG) peer review process, and the collegial networks around it (such as through AACI), have created forums that support innovative administrative careers. Importantly, the CCSG's harmonized merit descriptors inspire rubrics for CC administrative career training.

As part of our mandate to support training activities that anticipate the future needs of cancer research, we at the Office of Cancer Research Training and Education Coordination (CRTEC) at the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins took interest in understanding available opportunities for administrators-in-training to gain exposure, training and mentorship, formally and informally, in areas that align with academic missions.

Our efforts were inspired by exchanges and experiences with students and recent graduates of a Masters of Healthcare Administration (MHA) program. This Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (JHBSPH) program was launched in 1975 and has been accredited since 1992. It has a long-standing track record of drawing talented students with an acceptance rate of 25% in recent years. Approximately half of its 300 graduates in the past decade take an AMC-based position as their first role. With class sizes continuing to expand (40% over a decade), there are opportunities to consider training in areas that support both CC and AMC.

To address how our MHA curriculum integrated topics relevant to AMCs, we worked with a group of recent graduates and current students to review the curriculum (one of this *Commentary's* co-authors, Jasmine A. Salem, is a CRTEC-based recent graduate). The JHBSPH two-year program includes a didactic year followed by a residency year where students work in a hands-on setting with a preceptor in a healthcare delivery organization. While the curriculum emphasizes widely applicable areas including finance, fundamentals of the healthcare system, and leadership training, there is no formal coursework dedicated to topics academic administrators face especially in areas that relate to education and research.

CRTEC-based Rotation for Administrators-In-Training

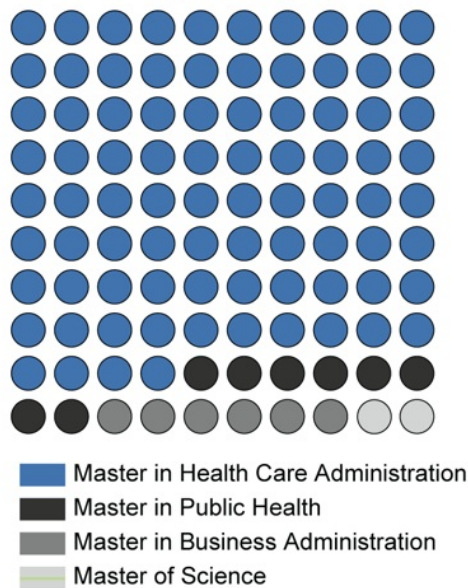
To bridge these gaps, we piloted a CRTEC rotation for second year MHA students who were residents at our CC (*Commentary* co-authors Barry Sullivan and Kathleen Dedora) and worked on arranging panels that could be integrated early in the first year while incoming students formulated their interests. For the CRTEC rotation, we aimed to expose students to areas where CC administrators are critical for catalyzing efforts especially in areas related to faculty development and grants administration. Students were offered to choose from areas related to their interests, including training grants, promotion processes, and community outreach and engagement projects.

Activities included identifying professional networks for CC and research administrators and attending grant writing workshops for trainees and early-career faculty. One student supported planning a CRTEC event, organized in collaboration with our community outreach and engagement colleagues, examining food deserts in Baltimore and how they affected cancer risk. Students also had an opportunity to participate in seminars about misconduct as part of a Responsible Conduct for Research course. Another student participated in data tracking and metric curation of career choices for recent MHA graduates at Johns Hopkins. At the end of the year, students presented their findings at a forum with CC leadership and synthesized how these efforts synergized with their clinical operations projects. Overall, the reception from both the students and their preceptors was outstanding and led to our commitment to share our experience with the wider CC community (including CRTEC teams) to highlight training opportunities in this space.

MHA Workforce is Projected to Increase

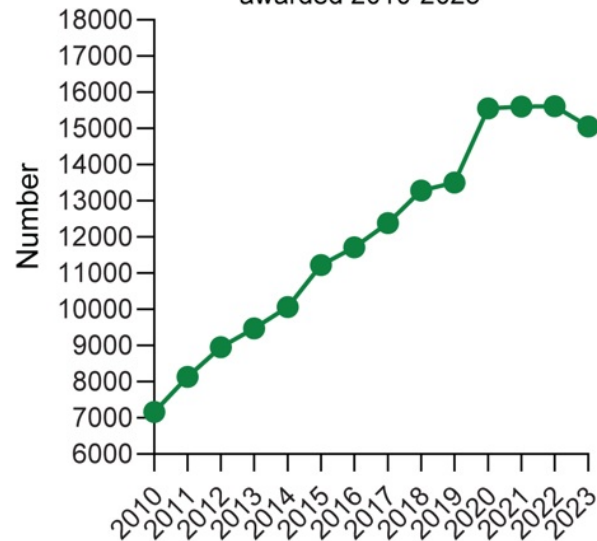
Each year, approximately 3,500 students graduate from one of 200 Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education (CAHME) programs. The vast majority of these students (85%) graduate from 172 MHA Programs (left panel, below). In increasingly complex healthcare and compliance environments, the number of MHA graduates has doubled since 2010 (right panel, below). Volumes are projected to expand by another 25% in the coming decade, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. We found that approximately 50% of MHA national programs are affiliated with AMCs, and 23% of the 172 are affiliated with an NCI-Designated CC, highlighting potential opportunities for similar collaborations beyond Johns Hopkins. The growing interest in administrative careers further underscores the importance of prioritizing aspects of training that will support the missions of CC and AMCs at large, beyond clinical operations.

Distribution of CAHME accredited healthcare administration graduate programs 2024



Proportion of degrees among 172 Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education (CAHME), <https://advance.cahme.org/SELECT.php>
Accessed October 2025

Healthcare administration master degrees awarded 2010-2023



National Center for Education Statistics (2024). Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/trendgenerator>.
Retrieved October 2025

The appeal of higher salaries in areas related to finance, consulting and industry is undoubtedly a competing factor for recruiting administrative talent. Despite that, AMCs continue to be attractive and offer fulfilling career development opportunities within supportive professional networks and in highly impactful areas.

In our pilot experiences, participating students listed early exposure to career pathways and role models as highly influential. Mentorship structures will also be essential for recruiting and retaining talent. Training administrators who are familiar with and can advocate for CC missions in all their facets has the potential to influence the future of cancer research. Fostering the training of this growing segment of the CC and AMC workforce will be essential in the face of challenging times and as new opportunities arise.

Our Mission

The Association of American Cancer Institutes (AACI) represents over 100 premier academic and freestanding cancer centers in the United States and Canada. AACI is accelerating progress against cancer by enhancing the impact of academic cancer centers and promoting cancer health equity.

About AACI Commentary

To promote the work of its members, AACI publishes *Commentary*, a monthly editorial series focusing on major issues of common interest to North American cancer centers, authored by cancer center leaders and subject matter experts.

Copyright 2025 | Association of American Cancer Institutes



Share This Email



Share This Email



Share This Email

Association of American Cancer Institutes (AACI) | PO Box 7317 | Pittsburgh, PA 15213 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!