



**XAVIER**  
**Ochsner**  
College of Medicine

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Xavier Ochsner College of Medicine Selects Danita Beck Wickwire as Inaugural Executive Director of Development**

**New Orleans, La.** — The [Xavier Ochsner College of Medicine \(XOCOM\)](#) proudly announces the appointment of Danita Beck Wickwire as its inaugural executive director of development. In this role, she will lead all philanthropic strategies, campaign planning, and principal giving efforts to advance the college's institutional priorities [and mission](#) of promoting health equity, innovation and the reimagination of healthcare.

Wickwire will lead all aspects of the philanthropic strategy and coordinate execution for XOCOM. Positioning the college for transformational investments that support its growth as the 5<sup>th</sup> allopathic historically Black college and university (HBCU) in the nation, Wickwire will focus on strengthening philanthropic partnerships and deepening engagement with existing donors.

"As executive director of development, Danita Wickwire's role will be pivotal in creating and maintaining meaningful relationships between XOCOM and those invested in transforming the landscape of healthcare by advancing the [mission](#) of our new medical school," said Dr. Leonardo Seoane, founding dean of the Xavier Ochsner College of Medicine. "Danita's track record for securing transformational gifts combined with her deep commitment to institutional excellence makes her the ideal leader to advance the development strategy for XOCOM. Her vision and experience will help position XOCOM as a national model for medical education

rooted in academic excellence, designed to transform the lives of its students and improve health outcomes for our communities.”

Danita brings nearly 30 years of strategic fundraising and campaign leadership experience across higher education, academic medicine, public health and national nonprofit sectors. She joins XOCOM from the National Audubon Society, where she served as vice president of strategic and principal giving. During her tenure, she facilitated over \$83 million in principal gifts as part of the \$826 million “Elevate” campaign and galvanized organizational growth through the strategic engagement of emerging philanthropic leaders.

Before joining Audubon, Wickwire held key fundraising leadership roles at Johns Hopkins University, where she developed and executed principal gift strategies across the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, the Johns Hopkins School of Nursing and the Johns Hopkins Berman Institute of Bioethics, among other schools, facilitating \$80 million in philanthropic commitments for the university’s \$6.015 billion “Rising to the Challenge” campaign. Danita gained significant campaign leadership experience at CCS Fundraising and built on her previous experience in educational philanthropy by directing multi-million-dollar efforts to advance education and other important causes.

This position marks a homecoming for Danita, who first connected with Xavier through the SOAR pre-college program as a rising high school senior. We are delighted to welcome Danita back to the Xavier family, where her passion and expertise will help propel XOCOM to new heights of excellence and impact.

Wickwire’s appointment comes following several recent updates for XOCOM, including:

- The announcement of several appointments of XOCOM associate deans, who will guide the development of the college’s medical education, clinical affairs, student affairs, and financial and research departments.
- The selection for candidate status by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME), the official accrediting body for MD-degree medical education programs in the United States, which moves the college closer to achieving preliminary accreditation.
- The establishment of the Dr. JW Carmichael Premedical Society, a giving society committed to empowering and supporting the next generation of healthcare professionals through funding and mentorship.
- The commemoration of the Dr. JW Carmichael Jr. Premedical Society with the Dr. JW Carmichael Jr. Medical Symposium during Xavier’s centennial homecoming celebration.

XOCOM is the latest venture of the longstanding partnership between [Xavier University of Louisiana](#) and [Ochsner Health](#), two institutions that have long been dedicated to improving health outcomes for local communities and advancing educational excellence. With the two organizations already partnering on programs such as the Xavier Physician Assistant Program and its newly created Master of Genetic Counseling program, XOCOM reinforces the continued collaboration between the two institutions to address inequities and create more pathways for building the healthcare workforce of the future.

In addition to being the nation's 5<sup>th</sup> allopathic HBCU college of medicine, XOCOM will be the only HBCU college of medicine in the Gulf South when it opens. The new medical school will create economic opportunity for Louisiana in Benson Tower within the growing downtown New Orleans BioDistrict. A recent economic impact report shows that as early as 2040, the total economic impact of the Xavier Ochsner College of Medicine (XOCOM) in Louisiana will grow to \$152.5 million.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.xula.edu/xocom/index.html>

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#### **About the Xavier Ochsner College of Medicine**

The [Xavier Ochsner College of Medicine \(XOCOM\)](#) was formed in 2024 through partnership between Xavier University of Louisiana (XULA), a leading historically Black university and college (HBCU), and Ochsner Health (Ochsner), a leading academic health system in the Gulf South. XOCOM will expand the physician workforce and provide new opportunities for more students seeking careers in medicine in New Orleans' downtown area as part of the BioDistrict, a development district that is growing biosciences and the local economy. XOCOM will feature curriculum emphasizing interdisciplinary collaboration, clinical proficiency, and compassionate patient care, equipping graduates with the skills and knowledge to address the complex healthcare challenges of the 21st century. Established in 1925 by Saint Katharine Drexel and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, Xavier is ranked among the top HBCUs in the nation, is a national leader in STEM and health sciences and has been a leading institution in sending its students to graduate from medical schools each year. Additionally, Xavier's College of Pharmacy is among the top producers of African American pharmacists in the United States. Established in 1942, Ochsner is the leading academic nonprofit healthcare provider in the Gulf South that delivers expert care at 46 hospitals and more than 370 health and urgent care centers. In 2025, Ochsner is honored to provide 36 accredited and 12 non-ACGME-accredited programs for more than 370 residents and fellows. XOCOM will open after receiving accreditation, building upon Xavier's mission to promote a more just and humane society by preparing its students to assume roles of leadership and service in a global society, and Ochsner's vision to inspire healthier lives and stronger communities. For more information about XOCOM, visit [Xavier Ochsner College of Medicine | Xavier University of Louisiana](#).