

# HOFSTRA NORTHWELL UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF NURSING & PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES

Hofstra University's Be the Change Scholar Curriculum  
helps PA students better serve Spanish-speaking patients

## ABSTRACT

Canopy Innovations partnered with Hofstra University to close health disparity gaps with Spanish-Speaking patients by equipping future PAs with medical Spanish. As part of their mission to deliver inclusive, high-quality care, Hofstra's Be the Change Scholar Program involved the participation of six scholars who enrolled in the CanopyLearn online Medical Spanish course, and two students who additionally completed the CanopyCredential Bilingual Medical Proficiency Assessment. Participants reported extremely positive outcomes and demonstrated measurable competency improvements.

## THE HOFSTRA NORTHWELL DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES

The Hofstra Northwell Department of Physician Assistant Studies commits to promoting the ongoing professional growth and betterment of clinical practice through self-directed learning activities. Instructors facilitate learning with a multi-modal approach that is creative, interprofessional, collaborative, and student-centered using the most advanced medical resources and technologies that will provide the student with the tools for lifelong learning. As part of a patient-centered, caring, empathetic approach to the delivery of health care, the program aims to instill awareness of, and respect for, individual cultures by educating students on the importance of understanding the unique needs of a diverse patient population.

## BE THE CHANGE SCHOLAR PROGRAM: A COMMITMENT TO THE LEP POPULATION

*"With the support of the Canopy and the nccPA Health Foundation Grant, PA students had the opportunity to improve communication skills with diverse patient populations. This allows PAs to do what we do best - provide quality, patient-centered care for patients of any background, age, and in any medical discipline."*



## CARINA LOSCALZO, MS, PA-C

Carina Loscalzo, MS, PA-C is Academic Faculty at the Hofstra Northwell Department of PA Studies. Ms. Loscalzo has held multiple roles in PA education for the past 23 years, including Program Director, Associate Director, and Clinical Coordinator. Clinically, Ms. Loscalzo continues to enjoy caring for patients in the field of emergency medicine at New York-Presbyterian Brooklyn Methodist Hospital. Ms. Loscalzo recently accepted a position as an ARC-PA site visitor. Ms. Loscalzo currently serves as the NYSSPA Education Committee Chair and as a Delegate to the American Academy of Physician Assistants House of Delegates.

**Carina Loscalzo**  
MS, PA-C



As the U.S. becomes more ethnically diverse, health care institutions face an increasing need to provide language services to their non-English speaking patrons. For example, there are currently 27 million patients in the US with limited English proficiency. Given the high costs and risks of insufficient language access, linguistic and cultural competency are critical skills for delivering quality care to all patients. Spanish-speakers are far and away the largest language-minority population, making the development and demonstration of skills to overcome communication barriers a pressing and unprecedented need for delivering quality patient care.

In recognition of Hofstra Northwell Department of Physician Assistant Studies' commitment to inclusive care, the program received a nccPA Health Foundation Be the Change Grant in 2021. A total of six Hofstra PA students were accepted into the Scholar Program. In addition to completing Canopy's Medical Spanish course and an implicit bias training, each student designed an Innovative Project to improve care models or education for this patient population.

**CANOPYLEARN MEDICAL SPANISH:  
IMPROVING COMMUNICATION WITH  
SPANISH-SPEAKING PATIENTS**

Six participants completed at least one level of CanopyLearn Medical Spanish. Based on student preference and previous skill level, three students completed Level 1, one student completed all 3 levels without the CanopyCredential exam, and two students completed all 3 levels with the CanopyCredential proficiency exam. All students completed a required pretest before the start of the course and a test at the same skill level after completion.

Students across the board demonstrated an exceptional increase in medical Spanish proficiency after just a single lesson. While the program's defined benchmark was a 20% increase on the pre-post test score for each student, all scholars met and surpassed this goal, with the highest percent an incredible increase of 109%.

**RESULTS**

Student	Level(s) Completed	Pre-Test Score	Post-Test Score	Percentage Increase
1	3	43%	90%	109%
2	3	43%	77%	79%
3	3	75%	96%	28%
4	1	41%	62%	51%
5	1	26%	50%	92%
6	1	30%	62%	107%



STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF  
CANOPYLEARN MEDICAL SPANISH

Upon program completion, administrators surveyed participants to measure their experience with the CanopyLearn Medical Spanish training. On a scale of 1 to 5, the program defined benchmark was 4.0, with 5 indicating the scholar “strongly agrees” with the statement. The average scores from evaluations indicate a strong and positive experience with the product and a high degree of confidence using their newly-learned skills with patients in a clinical setting.

Survey Statement	Score
Participating in the medical Spanish course improved my knowledge of the subject matter	4.5
Learning the medical Spanish course will greatly help me better care for my future patients	4.17
After taking this course, I will be more comfortable caring for Spanish-speaking patients	4.0

WHAT IS CANOPYLEARN  
MEDICAL SPANISH?

CanopyLearn Medical Spanish is a 45-hour, National Institutes of Health (NIH) supported, online course that builds Spanish language skills to address gaps in language access, build rapport with Spanish-speaking patients, and improve patient satisfaction and outcomes. The course is hosted on Canopy's proprietary eLearning platform and is completely self-paced to fit into the busy schedules of healthcare students and professionals.

The 3-level program features a multi-modal approach with bite-sized modules. It also employs a unique learning-by-speaking methodology that walks users through common terms and phrases, Spanish grammar, pronunciation, and cultural competency, all specifically in the medical context. Further, its telenovela, El Puente del Destino, and the accompanying role play exercises build listening comprehension and conversational skills key to helping students feel confident and qualified to speak to patients upon course completion.

With the conclusion of each lesson, participants earn a Certificate of Completion that they may download or print. Nurses, physicians, and physician assistants may also claim Continuing Education credits.

WHAT IS THE CANOPYCREDENTIAL BILINGUAL MEDICAL PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT?

CanopyCredential is the only scenario-based, standardized language proficiency test designed to assist healthcare organizations in identifying Qualified Bilingual Staff (QBS) who can care for patients directly in a language other than English. Specifically designed to comply with the requirements for bilingual staff outlined in Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act, the test assesses medical-specific speaking and listening scenarios based on real patient interactions.

Test-takers can choose to complete both the medical Spanish and the medical English portions of the test or can waive out of the English portion based on responses to a language background questionnaire at the beginning of the exam.

Users who complete the exam receive a Canopy Scorecard with a detailed description of their result according to the Canopy Scale for Bilingual Medical Proficiency, adapted directly from the internationally recognized Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) to create the only medical-specific, standardized language proficiency scale. Test-takers can then use this result to pinpoint areas of improvement.



## HOFSTRA: FULFILLING THE MISSION

The Hofstra Northwell Department of Physician Assistant Studies remains committed to serving the growing Spanish-speaking population. Hofstra is investigating the possibility of integrating medical Spanish training into the curriculum for all students. In the interim, Hofstra is seeking grant funding to implement the Be the Change Scholar Curriculum for an additional 5-10 students]

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## CANOPY INNOVATIONS

Canopy Innovations is a New York City -based digital health company. Canopy is a leading provider of healthcare technologies designed to bridge and end the linguistic and cultural barrier between providers and patients. Canopy's technology research and development is supported by innovation grant funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

### **To learn more about Canopy:**

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