



OREGON COLLEGE *of* ORIENTAL MEDICINE

# Twenty Questions to Ask Your Prospective Acupuncture College

*Compare feedback you receive from other colleges with OCOM's responses.*

## 1. Is your college a “for profit” or a nonprofit institution?

Since opening in 1983, **Oregon College of Oriental Medicine (OCOM)** has always been a nonprofit institution. Any financial surpluses at the end of the budget year are always reinvested in the college, not diverted towards external shareholders or their individual profits. OCOM is governed by a highly committed Board of Trustees, who approve budgets and oversee broad strategy. As with all nonprofits, trustees receive no compensation for their work.

## 2. Is the college accredited?

OCOM's master's program was first accredited by ACAOM in 1989, and has been reaccredited four times since. Each time, OCOM received the maximum reaccreditation renewal period possible.

## 3. What is your college's NCCAOM pass rate and how does it compare to the national average?

For each of the past four years, OCOM students' first-time pass rate on the NCCAOM exam (the profession's credentialing examination) has consistently been above 90 percent and, statistically speaking, significantly higher than the national average. Most recently, the OCOM pass rate was 92 percent.

## 4. Does your college offer Federal Financial Aid or scholarships?

Approximately 89 percent of the OCOM student body take advantage of Federal Financial Aid. Students are eligible to apply for the Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan and the Federal Direct Graduate PLUS loan. The Graduate Plus Loans are available to eligible, creditworthy students. In addition, OCOM offers the Board of Trustees Student Scholarships to a select number of new and current students.

## 5. How many graduates do you have? What percentage of your graduates are still in practice after 10 years? Are your graduates satisfied with their professional life?

As of 2015, OCOM has graduated 1,339 students. A 2007 graduate survey based on a random sample of 150 of our alumni received a high response rate (60 percent). It revealed that more than 85 percent of graduates were still actively practicing after 10 years. Levels of professional satisfaction were high among all categories of respondents, with 53 percent reporting they were “very” or “extremely” satisfied with the state of their practices.

## 6. Does your college support a professional development department?

OCOM employs a full-time faculty member as chair of the college's Professional Development Center (PDC). This position is designed to provide ongoing support and mentoring to OCOM students from the first day of their education. This helps students learn the business of becoming an acupuncture practitioner from the ground up, and prepares them for successful independent practice. We believe this structure is unique among acupuncture colleges nationwide.

## 7. Do you offer free electives to enrolled students, including participation in continuing education events?

OCOM offers all students the opportunity to take any electives offered at the college at no additional cost. Students are also eligible to participate in numerous continuing education activities during their enrollment (at minimal or no cost).

**8. Does your college offer a trip to study in China as part of its academic program?**

Each fall, OCOM faculty members lead master's student graduates and alumni on a six-credit (five-week) study trip to Nanjing, China, the costs of which can be covered by Financial Aid. Students learn from master Chinese practitioners, and observe and participate in patient care in various Chinese medical centers, both traditional and modern.

**9. How does your college community support your students throughout the program academically and personally?**

OCOM provides an array of student services, including academic advising, supportive counseling, low-cost clinic services, and subsidies for psychological services and tutoring. Social events, student clubs, guest speakers, community forums and community outreach afford students the opportunity to interact with faculty, staff and the larger Portland community in informal settings.

**10. How many treatments are performed each year in your Intern Teaching Clinic?**

OCOM's two clinics perform more than 25,000 patient treatments annually, providing a rich context and a comprehensive set of clinical experiences for interns.

**11. Do your clinical interns have sole responsibility for treating patients, or do they treat in pairs?**

At OCOM, the clinical internship is designed so that interns, under faculty supervision, have sole responsibility for treating patients for most of their year-long internship. Most acupuncture colleges require interns to "double up," treating patients in pairs; this can reduce the intern's amount of direct exposure to patient care.

**12. What percentage of patients seen in your intern clinic are low-income patients or seniors, and what opportunities do students have to treat underserved populations?**

Approximately 70 percent of patients treated in the OCOM clinics are low-income or seniors. We are proud to support the provision of services to underserved or vulnerable members of our local community. Our students work in more than 10 community clinics, serving populations of alcohol and drug rehabilitation, homeless, HIV/AIDS, geriatrics, street youth and mental health.

**13. In addition to acupuncture, what forms of bodywork are incorporated into the curriculum and are there opportunities for teacher certification?**

Students study four quarters of either shiatsu (Japanese acupressure) or tuina (Chinese massage), and apply their skills in a dedicated bodywork clinic. Advanced electives in both forms can also be pursued by the interested student. Students are eligible to apply for the teacher certification training in One Thousand Hands Buddha, Lingui Qigong. The sequence is designed to prepare advanced students to teach qigong through intensive, advanced instruction.

**14. Does your college have a Chinese herbal program?**

OCOM's Chinese herbal medicine program includes over 200 hours of required coursework in single herbs, herbal formulas and clinical hours completed in our OCOM Herbal Medicinary and herbal clinic. As an integrated Oriental medicine program, instruction in Chinese herbalism is interwoven into classes in theory, pathology and nutrition.

**15. Does your college employ a full-time research director? Do you offer a research course sequence to all enrolled master's students?**

OCOM is a national leader in acupuncture research, and since 1999 has employed a full-time Dean of Research who oversees the college's research department and who is active in the national acupuncture research community. OCOM's research course sequence is offered in the first, second and third years of the program, culminating in a Research Practicum course in the third year. Students also participate actively in the collection of patient reported outcomes data, which can be used for research purposes, during their clinical internship.

**16. Has your college received any research grants from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) or other funding organizations?**

OCOM is one of only a handful of acupuncture colleges to have an extensive history of receiving research grants from NIH, including several grants from the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM). OCOM also collaborates with other mainstream medical centers on research studies. A recent example is a collaboration with the University of Arizona to study temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorder. In addition, OCOM has a long history of obtaining grants from local foundations. In 2009, the OCOM Library was awarded a \$58,000 grant from the Oregon State Library federal block grant system for systems development, and OCOM's clinics have been awarded grants from the Kaiser Permanente Foundation to support clinical treatment services for low-income and underserved patients.

**17. Is your college's biomedical sequence taught by faculty with an in-depth understanding of Chinese medicine?**

Most of OCOM's biomedical sequence is taught by dually-qualified ND/LAc practitioners who are trained in both naturopathic medicine and acupuncture. This background provides students with a rich context for learning. Also, a large portion of OCOM's biomedical sequence is taught by full-time faculty rather than adjunct instructors.

**18. Does your college have any full-time faculty members? If so, how many of them are doctorally trained?**

Unlike most mainstream colleges and universities, very few single-purpose acupuncture colleges employ full-time faculty — OCOM is a notable exception. Sixteen full-time faculty members are currently employed at the college, and more than 80 percent of them are trained at the doctoral level, either in China or the United States. They provide a core of highly qualified instructors; well over half of all master's program classroom instruction and clinical supervision is provided by full-time OCOM faculty members.

**19. Does your college have a doctoral (DAOM) program, offering advanced clinical training? Is it accredited?**

OCOM was one of the first colleges in the nation to establish an approved DAOM program. We graduated the first cohort of DAOM students in the U.S. in 2005; the program was accredited by ACAOM in 2007. We offer one of only a few accredited DAOM programs in the nation.

**20. Does your college collaborate with other alternative medical colleges? Mainstream medical schools?**

OCOM is a founding member of OCIM, the Oregon Collaborative for Integrative Medicine ([www.o-cim.org](http://www.o-cim.org)), in partnership with National College of Natural Medicine, Western States Chiropractic College, and Oregon Health & Science University. We have a long history of working side-by-side with peer institutions in the alternative medical field, including numerous collaborations on research grants.

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