

Winter 2026 Acupuncture Student Town Hall Meeting #2

Date/time: March 19, 2026, 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Format: Zoom

Primary purpose: To update students on clinic space recovery, scheduling, faculty hiring, curriculum changes, and broader institutional developments.

Attendees and Roles

The discussion was led by Malcolm Youngren, with contributions from Kellie Knight, David Sol, Patrick Robinson, and Chryso Neophytou-Tsimis, among others. Greg Russo, the Chief Information Officer, was also present and expected to support technology and system-related work. Student participants asked questions or raised concerns.

Facility and Clinic Recovery

A major portion of the meeting focused on the aftermath of the ceiling collapse and flood-related disruptions in the clinic area. Malcolm Youngren reported that engineers, architects, city representatives, building personnel, and attorneys had all been involved in evaluating the situation and ensuring safety. He emphasized that no one was injured and that the institution was working through the building's legal and operational process to restore and expand usable space.

The main update was the planned use of the 18th floor as additional clinical and support space. Malcolm said the 18th floor had been signed off on and that IT equipment had already been brought in to help activate the space. Kellie Knight explained that the floor would include four treatment rooms, consultation areas, frosted conference room glass for privacy, a sink, and room for additional clinical functionality. The team expected to have the space operational by the following week or mid-next week, although the full building process would take longer.

Herb Dispensary and Space Use

The herb dispensary was another major topic, especially after concerns from students that herbal resources were being reduced or disorganized. Kellie Knight and Chryso Neophytou-Tsimis clarified that the main dispensary would remain on the main clinic floor, while excess inventory and storage would move to the 18th floor to free up space downstairs. They explained that the goal was to make the main clinic more functional for preparing and dispensing formulas without having to search through boxes.

Chryso credited Sonia Lee with leading the dispensary reorganization, ordering herbs, managing inventory, and deciding what would move upstairs. The team noted that the shelving and configuration work would happen over the break because HVAC pump installation had to be completed first. Kellie also noted that the pumps would improve long-standing ventilation and heating/cooling problems, and that the final layout would not reduce current usable space because the equipment would be placed in the ceiling.

Faculty Hiring and Leadership

The leadership team announced several staffing changes and hiring plans. Malcolm explained that Rob Johnson would step down at the end of the term, but would continue until the new semester and overlap with his successor for a couple of weeks. A new hire with extensive experience in integrative healthcare and running integrative centers had already accepted an offer and would be introduced later, likely around the middle of April. This role, along with a chair of clinical education, was described as part of a two-part senior leadership structure for the clinic.

Chryso provided an update on faculty recruitment, stating that interviewing had concluded for bioscience and that the team was moving through interviews for Chinese medicine, clinic, herbology, and acupuncture positions. She anticipated all interviews would be completed by the end of the month, with announcements in the first week of April. She also confirmed that the college would have five department chairs in place for the new term, all based in New York, with office hours available online and in person. Additional faculty were being hired across all departments to increase flexibility, coverage, and backup capacity.

Curriculum and Blackboard Transition

Students asked about the transition from Moodle to Blackboard and the availability of practice tests and recorded reviews. Patrick Robinson explained that course building for Blackboard would begin in the spring with faculty and instructional designers, supported by a new vice president of curriculum and instruction. He said he could not guarantee a fall release date, but work would be underway after break.

Chryso added that more reviews would be offered next term and that the team was working on practice tests for comprehensives, but Moodle could not support the testing system they wanted to use. She said these resources would move into Blackboard once the transition occurred. She also suggested that board exam practice tests might become available in 2027 using the same team.

Graduation and Clinical Integration

Malcolm and Patrick discussed changes to graduation and transition ceremonies. The school is moving toward three graduations per year, one per term, to allow more family and friends to attend. Patrick said the University of Manhattan venue would be used because it offers roughly 750 seats and better accommodates the growing community. The goal is to hold a public transition ceremony in the morning and graduation in the afternoon, creating a more integrated community event.

The leaders also outlined a new pilot program for standardized patient simulations involving acupuncture, massage, and nursing students. Patrick described standardized patients as trained actors who respond consistently to student interviews, assessments, and treatments, allowing students to practice in a safe, low-stakes setting. Malcolm said the pilot would begin in the fall and would represent a distinctive interprofessional model for acupuncture education. Both leaders framed these changes as part of the college's broader move toward integrative healthcare.

Off-Sites and Interprofessional Training

Malcolm also discussed off-site clinical expansion, including Jamaica Medical Center and Womenkind. He described these as part of a larger effort to place acupuncture students in integrative environments alongside massage therapists and nurses. Kellie added that Jamaica Hospital's dual-supervisor model was especially exciting and called for more supervisors with multiple credentials to support interprofessional training.

Patrick and Malcolm both reinforced that this work is intended to strengthen the institution's role in integrative medicine and to broaden learning opportunities across programs. They emphasized that these models were still emerging but represented an intentional direction for the school.

Student Questions and Concerns

Several students raised concerns about communication, scheduling, classroom use, and the herb program. Rachel asked about clinic shift notifications, and Malcolm said Rob Johnson would continue scheduling through the end of term, with the new person starting in mid-April and overlapping briefly. Rachel also asked about differences between off-site and on-site supervisors, and the team clarified that staffing changes were seasonal and that some supervisors take summer off.

Jessica asked about access to recordings from prior meetings and whether the full clinic would move to the 18th floor. David Sol explained that prior notes had been sent, but that there was uncertainty about storage and access to recordings, and Greg Russo would help sort it out. Another question concerned scholarship awards at graduation; Patrick clarified that there is a highest academic achievement award across all programs, but no scholarship attached to it.

Communication and Student Trust

A substantial segment of the meeting addressed student frustration with communication and perceived instability. Lenny said the student body often experiences promises that are not reflected in day-to-day life and called for clearer, more frequent updates. David responded that communication is a general higher education issue, not just a PCHS issue, and said the college is actively trying to improve how it communicates across stakeholders. Malcolm added that the college had invested in full-time faculty, office co-location, and tools like Comfeed to improve communication.

The leadership team acknowledged that the college had made mistakes, especially during the COVID-era transition online, but insisted that substantial investments had been made in faculty, technology, curriculum, and clinical infrastructure. David noted that Malcolm had been giving monthly video updates in the student hub, and that those updates were meant to address major institutional changes. They agreed that specific concerns should be brought forward directly so they can be addressed in a more focused way.

Herb Room Discussion

The final major issue was the herb room and the impact of the room's configuration on herb student learning. Cliff and Hunter both argued that herbs were understocked, hard to access, and difficult to use in practice, especially given the high cost of tuition and the importance of herb training. They said the current setup made it difficult to prepare formulas and limited opportunities to practice core herbal skills.

Malcolm acknowledged that the room configuration was wrong and said the institution would provide a written update on where things stand with the herb room and ordering. Chryso said Sonia had already placed herb orders, was reviewing inventory, and had opened an account with YinCare, with an order arriving that day. Malcolm concluded by inviting Cliff and Hunter to meet with him privately so the conversation could continue in a focused way.

Action Items

- Activate the 18th floor clinic and treatment space, including treatment rooms, consultation space, and IT setup.
- Finalize faculty hiring and announce all five chairs in early April.
- Follow up on clinic shift scheduling for students through the end of term and overlap with the new clinic leader.
- Clarify recording storage and access for student town halls and CAC meetings.

- Provide a written update on the herb room, herb ordering, and dispensary reorganization.
- Review any specific registration or classroom access issues reported by students.