

UCF Medical School At Full Enrollment, Celebrates 10th Anniversary



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UCF's College of Medicine celebrates its 10th anniversary by welcoming 120 new students, including a former green beret, a windsurfing champion and NCAA baseball player.

With August 1's White Coat Ceremony, which is a tradition to welcome its new class, the medical school fulfill's part of its original plan – to be at full capacity by 2016. The class of 120 students means the school is now at full enrollment with 480 physicians-in-training.

The Florida Legislature and then Gov. Jeb Bush approved UCF's new medical school in 2006. The charter class of 41 enrolled in August 2009 with each student receiving full-four year scholarships thanks to \$6.5 million in community donations. With the scholarship campaign, UCF became the first medical school in U.S. history to provide full scholarships to an entire class. Since 2013, UCF has graduated 263 physicians who are working in healthcare across Florida and the nation.

"We have grown quickly," said Dr. Deborah German, vice president for medical affairs and founding dean of the medical school. "Speed does not always equal quality, but for us, the two go hand in hand. Our students are scoring in the top quartile and above nationally on the board exams. And we are gaining a national and worldwide reputation for innovation and academic excellence. The best part is we are just getting started."

As one of the first medical schools to be built in America from the ground up in generations, UCF's vision is to become a new kind of medical school for the 21st century, one that uses innovation and new technology to create doctors who are lifelong learners and excellent in both technical and communication skills. The school's integrated curriculum combines science and clinical experiences, individual and team learning throughout the

four years of medical school. Unlike most other M.D. programs, UCF requires every medical student to complete a two-year research project to develop a “spirit of inquiry” to investigate and solve patient problems. As a result, many medical students present and publish research at local, regional and national events before ever graduating.

The college’s innovative learning centers include a state-of-the-art Anatomy Lab with high-definition monitors and a digital autopsy table and a Clinical Skills and Simulation Center where students treat mannequins and actors – called “standardized patients” – from their first weeks of medical school. The college’s Health Sciences Library is 98 percent digital – meaning students and faculty can access learning materials 24-7 on any device. And the college’s Personal Librarian Program assigns a librarian to every student for research and analytic support and data collection. The faculty’s use of interactive, digital learning systems have earned them national recognition for innovation.

Such innovations have yielded top results. UCF College of Medicine students score in the top quartile nationally in the Step 1 and Step 2 United States Medical Licensing Exams, which test both scientific and clinical knowledge. UCF’s Class of 2016, for example, scored an average of 253 on the clinical knowledge exam; the national average was 240. On the National Board of Medical Examiners Subject Exams, UCF students score above the national average on every subject tested – pediatrics, OB/GYN, neurology, psychiatry, surgery and medicine. UCF’s scores have increased even as enrollment grew more than 10-fold in the last seven years.

And our students are getting residencies – highly competitive positions at hospitals nationwide necessary to complete their training and practice medicine.

UCF’s residency match rate is higher than the national average. In 2016 UCF’s match rate was 98.9 percent compared to a national rate of 93.9 percent. And some of the med school’s first graduates are starting to hit their career strides. Dr. Jonathan Gullett, a member of the charter class of 2013 and a pathologist, will enter an epidemiology fellowship at Emory University this fall, where he will work with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

From its inception, the College of Medicine has focused on selecting a unique blend of students who not only are academically excellent, but have a passion for medicine. German often talks about developing each student’s “head and heart” for medicine.

During the White Coat Ceremony, German delivers the new students’ first class titled “The Good Doctor. German has delivered the first lesson to all the classes at the med school. The dean has asked first-year students to imagine the person they love most and then describe the traits of the doctor they want treating their sick loved one. As students suggest traits, German writes the words on a blackboard in front of an audience of almost 1,000. That board is displayed outside the Student Affairs Office for the entire year and becomes the new students’ contract with their faculty, each other, their community and their dean.

This year’s new class includes athletes, in sports including football, baseball, soccer and swimming. One is an Olympic wind surfer, another a competitive equestrian. They are military officers, including a Green Beret medic who served in Iraq and Lebanon and an Army chaplain. They are humanitarians who have served their communities in hospice programs and free clinics. One fought Ebola in Africa. They are artists and entertainers, including two ballroom dancers, a ballet dancer and an improv comedian. And they are trained scientists. The Class of 2020 includes a married couple, both with Ph.D.s, who chose UCF for their medical training. Fifty-two of the students conducted formal research across the globe before ever entering medical school, on topics including Alzheimer’s disease, autism, voice therapy and adverse reactions to medication.

“They are excellent students who are dedicated to science, medicine, compassion and service,” German said. “Each is well prepared for the work ahead.”

As the College of Medicine moves into a second decade, it is focused on expanding its research and clinical missions. It just began a department of Public Health that will work with colleges across UCF to focus on diseases facing at-risk populations. The college’s Burnett School of Biomedical Sciences is developing medical research partnerships involving nanoscience, engineering and 3D printing and just finished a re-organization to better focus its scientific efforts on the diseases that plague humanity – cancer, cardiovascular, neurodegenerative and infectious diseases. UCF’s medical school is unique nationally in that it includes undergraduate and graduate biomedical sciences programs, with close to 3,000 students.

In patient care, the college now has two locations for its physician practice – UCF Health – and is opening another this month, an on-site clinic for Osceola County Sheriff’s Office employees and their families. UCF has also purchased land in Lake Nona for a teaching hospital and the medical school is pursuing partnership opportunities for that effort in Central Florida and beyond. The college recently formed a consortium with Hospital Corporation of America (HCA), the nation’s largest hospital company, to create 550-plus residency programs in Florida by the year 2020 to help address the state’s physician shortage. UCF currently has university-sponsored residencies at the Orlando VA Medical Center, Osceola Regional Medical Center, Ocala Regional Medical Center and North Florida Regional Medical Center.

The medical school’s growth and promise for the future drew Class of 2020 student Jaclyn Marrinan to chose UCF over others for her M.D. training. The Raleigh, N.C. native graduated from Georgetown University with a degree in international health and earned a masters in control of infectious diseases from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Disease. Before coming to UCF, she worked in Africa fighting the Ebola outbreak.

“I chose UCF because I feel the school has an exciting trajectory ahead of it. Dean German’s energy and drive to make UCF the premier medical school in the center of a medical city won me over in the first hour of my visit to the school,” she said. “I was also very impressed by the technology the school boasts, especially compared to the other schools I considered. The school is extremely forward thinking which was a big draw for me.”