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FSU NEWS

'A significant step': FSU, TMH, Apalachee Center to launch psychiatry residency program



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Florida State University's College of Medicine recently announced plans to launch a new psychiatry residency program — an addition that will bring psychiatric training into the Tallahassee area.

In partnership with Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare (TMH) and the Apalachee Center, the initiative would help address the crucial need for training mental health care providers in the region and across Florida.

FSU's announcement about the future program comes after the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) granted the university and its partners initial accreditation to move forward with the plan.

"This is exciting and welcomed news," FSU College of Medicine Interim Dean Alma Littles said in a prepared statement. "There is a recognized shortage of psychiatrists in the state and a more critical shortage in this area of the state."

Other FSU news: Florida State ranks in annual Top 100 Worldwide Universities List for 7th year in a row

The program will be based at the Apalachee Center located on Capital Circle Northeast — which is a nonprofit organization that specializes in providing mental health care to those experiencing emotional, psychiatric and substance abuse crises — and it will provide medical school graduates with four years of training in psychiatry.

A small group of four residents of the program will begin July 1.

“This represents an enormous step forward for behavioral health services in this region and promises to dramatically enrich the pool of psychiatrists available to care for the needs of North Floridians,” Jay Reeve, president and chief executive officer of the Apalachee Center, said in a release.

“Our new psychiatry residents will benefit enormously from the coordination and broad training experience, especially with traditionally underserved populations, that this system of care offers,” he added.

A 2022 poll conducted by TMH shows that mental health care and medical care accessibility were tied as the most important issues that affect the Tallahassee community, with care access being more difficult for underserved individuals such as the elderly and minorities.

Although psychiatry is one of the fastest growing residency programs in the nation, nearly 60% of graduating medical students end up leaving Florida for residency training because of a shortage of residency slots in the state, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges.

With the addition of the psychiatry residency program, FSU's College of Medicine will offer students a total of nine residency programs and three fellowships.

In the meantime, the Florida Senate recently advanced a bill that would designate behavioral health teaching hospitals across the state. Through a \$114 million plan to address a state shortage of mental health professionals, four pilot facilities would link to medical schools in Tampa, Jacksonville, Miami and Gainesville.

Mridul Mazumder, clerkship director for geriatrics at the College of Medicine's Tallahassee Regional Campus, will serve as program director of the new psychiatry residency initiative.

Mazumder says the residency program will get monetary support from TMH and the Apalachee Center — which will be managed through FSU's Graduate Medical Education Office — with state and federal funding sources being considered for additional funds.

Through the program, psychiatry residents will train in providing inpatient, residential and outpatient services, with training sites potentially including the Apalachee Center as well as TMH's 13 outpatient clinics and two acute psychiatric hospitals, according to the university.

TMH vice president and chief integration officer Dean Watson says the future program will help address two of the Tallahassee region's top health priorities — mental health and substance abuse.

“The expansion of residency programs is a significant step toward our shared goal of becoming an Academic Medical Center where the latest treatments, technologies and resources are developed to the benefit of our patients and community,” Watson said in a prepared statement.

The efforts of FSU and its partners toward establishing Tallahassee as a leading medical research and health care center also include plans to build an academic health center on TMH's campus through the FSU Health initiative. The center's construction process is expected to take a couple of years.

In addition, the university's College of Medicine has plans to add a family medicine residency program in Immokalee, Florida, where a psychiatry postdoctoral fellowship already exists.

“This growth in our graduate medical education programs will provide opportunities for more of our students and residents to train and remain in this area to practice,” Littles said, referring to the psychiatry residency program.

“The program will be a part of the growing FSU Health initiative, adding cutting-edge research and discovery of new knowledge to improve treatment of mental health conditions,” she added.

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