



Ten of the 11 Honors Medical Scholars gathered for a photo outside of the anatomy lab one recent afternoon. All are from the Class of 2015 unless otherwise noted. Back row, along the stair rail, from left: Judy Lin (Class of 2014), Joseph Hernandez (2014), Kevin Yan, John Turner and Ryan Dickert. Middle row, from left: Anushi Patel, Robyn Rachesky and Laura Irastorza. Front row, from left: Georgia Christakis and Amanda Abraira. Not pictured: Keerti Dantuluri (Class of 2014).

Peering into the pipeline

Picture a Panhandle kid being whisked to the doorstep of the College of Medicine in a magic school bus. If only it were that easy to bring in a top-quality, diverse student population from areas of the state that need more physicians.

Far more planning goes into the development of the College of Medicine's pipeline programs, but the intent is the same: a diverse student body that can help the medical school achieve its mission of producing the physicians Florida needs most.

Nearly 20 percent of the Class of 2015 arrived through that pipeline. Here's an overview.

Honors Medical Scholars

Created in 2006, this program attracts top high school students to Florida State and then to the College of Medicine. Eleven Scholars are current medical students here: three in the Class of 2014 and eight in the Class of 2015. And 42 undergrads are enrolled in the program.

Bridge

It provides a bridge into medical school for students whose characteristics make them good candidates for practicing primary care with underserved or minority patients in rural or inner-city communities.

Often they come from such communities themselves and had not originally considered medical school as an option.

Ten students who've completed the Bridge program are now medical students in the Class of 2015. The current Bridge group numbers 13 – all of whom are likely to join the M.D. Class of 2016.

SSTRIDE

The program reaches into middle and high schools in North Florida, encourages rural students to consider careers in medicine, and offers guidance, tutoring and other support. Five members of the Class of 2015 came through SSTRIDE's undergraduate program – the Multicultural Association of Premedical Students.

Currently 228 middle and high school students participate in Gadsden, Madison and Okaloosa counties. Seventh-graders became eligible in the 2003-04 academic year, so only now are they ready for medical school.

The Summer Institute, another SSTRIDE program, welcomes more than 60 high-school students who come from – or would want to practice medicine in – underserved areas of Florida and gives them a weeklong preview of medical school.

Four current College of Medicine students once participated in the summer

mini-med school experience, which began in 2003: Ericka O'Neil Bernardo (Class of 2012), Miranda Mack (Class of 2014), Brett Thomas (Class of 2014) and John Turner (Class of 2015, Honors Medical Scholar).

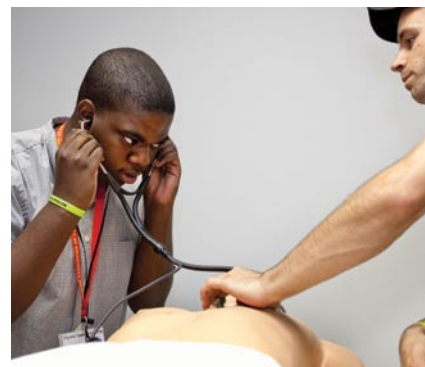
This summer, for the first time, most of the college's regional campuses not only recruited Summer Institute participants but also provided (or found donors to provide) scholarship support. For example, Capital Health Plan sponsored two students from rural areas – one each from Gadsden and Wakulla counties.

"CHP recognizes that our members in rural counties would benefit from increased access to local medical care," said Dr. Nancy Van Vessel, chief medical officer for the health maintenance organization. "We provided funding because we hope the FSU program will ultimately produce primary-care physicians willing to work in their hometown. This potential outcome would benefit the student by directing them to a solid career choice and benefit our mission to provide high-quality health care."

In Sarasota, U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan also sponsored two students to attend – one each from Sarasota and Venice high schools.

Thirty-two percent of past Summer Institute participants have gone on to enroll at Florida State. And two 2010 participants will start this fall as Honors Medical Scholars.

Said Myra Hurt, senior associate dean for research and graduate programs: "Our pipeline programs continue to succeed in recruiting great students for us."



Brandon Baker, left, from Tallahassee's Leon High School, was introduced to the stethoscope and much more during the Summer Institute. Guiding him was Class of 2014 medical student Chris McDonald.

COLIN HACKLEY