

# Over a decade later, FSU medical school prospers

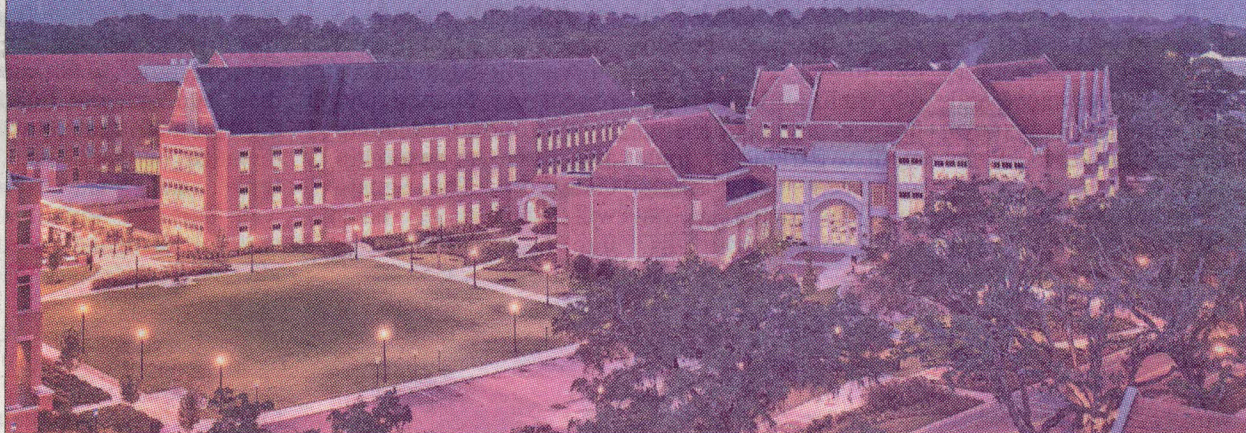


Photo courtesy of Ray Stanyard

The Florida State University medical school graduated 117 new physicians in May 2012. The number has raised from just 23 in the first graduating class of 2005.

## Nation's youngest medical school offers more than just a degree to U.S.'s future physicians

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For nearly a quarter of a century, not a single new medical school had opened its doors in the United States—then came the Florida State University College of Medicine.

As the youngest, fully accredited medical school in the nation, Florida State's College of Medicine has had an eventful decade since its conception in the summer of 2000. The last dozen years have been a period of evolution for the recently founded college, classified by ample expansion and growth.

On May 19, over 117 medical students graduated from the school, now boasting the credential of "doctor." The graduating class is the largest in the college's history—only 27



Photo courtesy of Ray Stanyard

**Members of the first class at the College of Medicine (the Class of 2005) got a tour of the new medical school building at the corner of West Call Street and Stadium Drive.**

students graduated with the first class in 2005.

During a university issued video interview, Myra Hurt, Ph.D., professor and senior associate dean for research and graduate programs at FSU's Col-

lege of Medicine, said that the founding of the institute was a miracle in and of itself.

"This is one of those projects that I say half laughingly 'we're on a mission from God,'" said Hurt.

"It's just amazing. [...] It's a harmonic conversion of forces and events."

Such forces were driven by a community-based need for an increase in quality medical care, particularly in the state's rural and geriatric populations, a concept that is carried on today through the College's mission statement:

"The FSU College of Medicine will lead the nation in preparing compassionate physicians to deliver the highest quality 21st Century patient-centered medicine to communities of greatest need."

Realizing this vision meant challenging the status quo by ignoring the conventionalities of a typical classroom setting and replacing textbooks and PowerPoint's with real

world experience.

To do so, the College of Medicine would have to take a different approach to instructing America's next generation of physicians, a project FSU's College of Medicine's Professor and Associate Dean for Medical Education Lynn Romrell, M.D., admits was not without its skeptics.

"When the school proposed setting up six regional campuses instead of a traditional teaching hospital, that was a very unusual thing," said Romrell. "That was innovative; [...] that was a risk. Could it really work to have an environment where you didn't have the same control, the same group of faculty who were based in the same hospital?"

According to Casey Cable M.D., Spring 2012 graduate from Florida State's College of Medicine, indeed FSU's innovative teaching model would prove successful and to the mutual benefit of both patient and physician.

"It's absolutely phenomenal the way FSU's Med School is set up," said Cable. "We have our satellite campuses and work directly with attendings—it's unprecedented. We come out so much more prepared for actual medicine because we're dealing with patients, with our

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**Alma B Littles M. D.**

Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education and Academic Affairs

doctors. It's a much better learning environment and prepares us much better for residency."

William Fields M.D., another member of the graduating class of 2012, said his experience with Florida State's College of Medicine was nothing but pleasant.

"It was wonderful," said Fields. "I was here [in Tallahassee] for the first two years, which was outstanding. All of the faculty have been very warm and welcoming, and then when I went to Fort Pierce it was the exact same—just a very close-knit group. It's been more than pleasurable."

For students like Cable and Fields, Florida State offers the option of completing their degrees at various locations in Florida outside of the Tallahassee area including, Daytona Beach, Ft. Pierce,

Orlando, Pensacola and Sarasota to gain more hands on experience.

But that's not the only way Florida State medical students are being integrated into worthy communities.

Through the establishment of student-run programs like FSUCares, an organization devoted to helping the underserved and underprivileged populations both locally and internationally, students are invited to embark on an alternative Spring Break adventure in either Panama, Immokalee, Florida, or the Texas-Mexico border—a trip that is sure to involve fun as well as philanthropy.

Florida State medical student Amanda Morden said just before FSUCares 2012 trip departed that her time in Panama during Spring Break 2011 allowed her to embrace her

future profession and gain a newfound appreciation for a different culture.

"Last time I went to Panama," said Morden. "It was a really good experience. I have studied Spanish, but it was an opportunity to put it into action. Even more so than that, I really got to learn about a different culture than my own. I learned how to interact with patients from another culture. I think I learned a lot about serving an underserved population."

It's this style of innovative, hands-on learning techniques combined with the College's diligence in staying current that students, such as recent graduate Trina Chakravarty M.D., said makes all the difference.

"They were really receptive to any advice that we had as far as faculty members and teaching styles," said Chakravarty. "From the time that I started they went from a graded system to a pass-fail system. Now all lectures are recorded and posted online. They've really tried to keep up with all the innovations and technology and things that would facilitate us for learning."

Today, Florida State's College of Medicine students have flourished in their chosen fields while

FSU faculty remain committed to the bettering of the healthcare community, a much anticipated result to a decade of labors that doesn't surprise Alma B Littles M.D., senior associate dean for medical education and academic affairs, who has been involved with the College since it's outset and said the first 12 years have been extremely successful.

"It's been tremendous growth with very successfully medical outcomes," said Littles.

For Dr. Littles, the Florida State University College of Medicine's unmatched compassion for underserved communities, combined with a dynamic teaching style, speaks for itself.

"We have a unique vision and a unique mission as well as a unique model for training our students, in terms of a model that focuses on primary care and meeting the needs of elderly, rural and other under-served populations, and the fact that our department training is done in the community where the patients are [...] so that they're having enough access to learning from large numbers of patients in that community, and I think that is very attractive to students," said Littles.