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Dean: FSU Med School on track

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April 11, 2012

Having remained true to its original mission, the College of Medicine at Florida State University today can see the results of its efforts to train physicians for communities that desperately need them.

Speaking Tuesday morning at the Health Care/ Health Sciences Roundtable of the Economic Development Council of Tallahassee- Leon County, Dr. John Fogarty, dean of the college, gave highlights of its first decade. He drew upon statistics about the graduates, the areas of medical practice they have pursued, and the college's economic impact on the region.

"The key part of this, and what's unique to our mission, is we are responsive to community needs, especially through service to elder, rural, minority and underserved populations," Fogarty told the breakfast gathering. "We have one of the most focused missions in the country and I think we try to live that mission on a daily basis."

The college has six regional campuses and two rural community programs in the state. Students spend their first two years in Tallahassee studying basic medical sciences, then go off to one of the regional sites for work there, usually with practicing physicians.

When the Florida Legislature approved the plans for a new medical school in 2000, the first new one in the U.S. in 25 years, the college had its skeptics. Some doubted the effectiveness of the community training model, whether it would attract good students, and even if they'd pass their board exams.

"I am here to tell you 11 years later, we are well down that path and doing very, very well," Fogarty said, noting figures that not only demonstrated superior student performance, but patient needs being met.

As for economic boost, the College of Medicine was studied by consultants from MGT of American, who estimated the financial impact in Tallahassee alone at almost \$750 million in the college's first 10 years of operation.

MGT estimates the impact now at \$100 million per year locally and \$160 million per year statewide with FSU's regional campus structure, or almost \$1 billion in impact every six years and growing.

Fogarty noted that the college's research portfolio has grown steadily to more than \$40 million, and that top-notch scientists are being hired and bringing funded research programs to campus.

Since 2005, there have been seven graduating classes of medical students, a total of 450. Fogarty said of that number, 338 are current residents, 31 are fellows and 79 are practicing physicians. Of those 79 in practice, 60 percent are in Florida and 68 percent are in primary care.

The roundtable members also discussed the idea of employee training for their organizations in conjunction with Workforce Plus. Bill Hambsh, CEO of North Florida Women's Care, said the courses could cover customer service for health-care providers, as well as other business topics.

"I think with a few words of wisdom, we can change our whole culture with our employees," Hambsh added .