

LOCAL

## FSU chief medical officer remembered as 'wonderful human being and doctor'

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The Florida State University medical community is mourning the loss of its Chief Medical Officer Dr. Daniel Van Durme.

Known for his leadership, friendship and larger-than-life personality, his presence and influence on FSU and the community will live on for many years, Dr. Alma Littles, the FSU College of Medicine's interim dean, said in a statement.

"He was a great person, wonderful human being and doctor," Littles said. "He and I have been friends and colleagues for almost 40 years, since we were residents. Our children grew up in the FAFP [Florida Academy of Family Physicians] together. I helped recruit him to FSU. He will be missed in so many ways and so many places and by so many people."

Van Durme, 61, died Tuesday afternoon as a result of injuries he suffered in a motorcycle accident April 20, according to a CaringBridge page managed by his family.

The medical leader had a career mentoring thousands of family physicians, winning numerous teaching awards and participating in service-learning experiences over the years, Littles said.

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He focused a lot of his work on helping medically underserved populations and finding ways to bring care to rural areas and small towns. This passion led to the development of FSU PrimaryHealth, the medical school's primary care center in southwest Tallahassee, when he became medical school's senior associate dean for clinical and community affairs in 2018. He was commuting to the clinic from FSU's campus at the time of his accident, according to a social media post from FSU College of Medicine.

To honor Van Durme's legacy, the college is creating the Daniel Van Durme, M.D. Memorial Scholarship Fund, according to the social media post. The school will share the link to as soon as it is available.

He also played an integral part in the university's COVID-19 response, said Kyle Clark, senior vice president for finance and administration. During the world's uncertainty, Van Durme frequently made local, state and national media appearances.

"We will be forever grateful for his steady leadership, wise counsel and compassion for the campus community," Clark, who worked very closely with Van Durme during the pandemic, said. "Our hearts go out to Dr. Van Durme's family, colleagues, students and all those whose lives he touched."

Melissa Velarde, one of Van Durme's many former students, said the lessons she learned from him were too many to recall. While medical school is centered on lectures and exams, it wasn't his knowledge that influenced her the most but his heart.

He took everyone under his wing, and though he held an important position, he always was around and made himself accessible, Velarde said.

"I don't know how he found time to be everywhere he was," she said.

His humanity was inspiring, Velarde said. One of the biggest lessons that has stuck with Velarde since she began practicing medicine seven years ago is this: Do not treat your patients like a number. While you see many people in a workday, to them you are it.

"The world has just lost one of the most incredible people I have ever met in my entire life," Velarde said holding back tears.

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