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COLLEGE TOWN



Florida State University graduates 56 physician assistants to help address healthcare shortage



Photo by: Justin White



By: Justin White

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (WTVL) — FSU graduated 56 physician assistants to help address Florida's healthcare crisis, with 7.5 million people living in areas lacking primary care providers.

- According to the Florida Council, a third of people lived in an area with a shortage of primary care physicians in 2023.
- FSU graduated 56 physician assistants ready to go out and serve the community.
- **Watch the video below to** hear from school leaders about the importance of their work.



BROADCAST TRANSCRIPT:

Florida's healthcare system is under growing strain, with millions of people living in areas without enough primary care providers.

I'm Justin White, your College Town neighborhood reporter

Florida State University recently graduated its seventh class of physician assistants what leaders say are part of the solution.

"One-fourth of Floridians do not have a primary care provider, and FSU has a strong dedication to releasing more primary care providers in our workforce," said Mary Beth Brown, 2025 class president of the FSU PA program.

The 56 newest Graduates of the Florida State University College of Medicine PA program enter the workforce, where, according to the Florida Council, 7.5 million people lived in an area with a shortage of primary care physicians in 2023.

This also comes after Florida's Live Healthy Act was signed into law in 2024, aiming to expand access to care by strengthening the healthcare workforce statewide.

Ben Smith, Director & Assoc. Dean of the program talked to me about the need for the program.

"We think about access to care. We often think about providing primary care, that initial care to the patients to the population, to children, to adults, to older adults as well. Tremendously important things to consider, PAs can go into the front lines as primary care advisors and can make a tremendous difference, but PAs can work in specialty medicine, as well as specialty practice to help increase access to care also," said Dean Smith.

2024 projections from the Florida Hospital Association estimated a shortfall of more than 17,000 physicians by 2035.

Mary Beth Brown, 2025 Class President of the FSU PA Program, said, "24 counties in the state of Florida have fewer than 10 physicians per 10,000 residents. of those 24 counties, half of those counties are located in the panhandle, which includes Wakula County, Madison County, Gadsden County, My home county, Liberty County, Calhoun."

With 78% of FSU PA alumni workforce practicing in Florida, these are issues that the 2025 PA class looks to combat.

Class President and 3rd member of her Family to complete this program, North Florida native Mary Beth Brown is excited to help serve her community

“One of the things that drew me to our program is that it prioritizes serving the underserved, rural communities, elder communities, and it wants to bring back local residents to our area to practice medicine and that's what I'm very excited about, i love the folks from our local area, there good people and excited to have them as future patients,” Brown added.

Leaders say these 56 graduates are ready to serve communities across North Florida and beyond, after averaging 1,796 hours in clinical settings and 1,268 patient encounters. Helping expand access to care almost immediately.

From the FSU College of Medicine, I'm Justin White, ABC 27.

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