

FSU's College of Medicine lauded for its diversity



Byron Dobson, Democrat senior writer 9:18 p.m. EDT June 29, 2016

Outreach programs credited for boosting numbers of black, Hispanic students



(Photo: Mike Ewen/Democrat)

Florida State University's College of Medicine, created 15 years ago with a goal of producing more minority physicians, is one of the most diverse medical schools in the country.

Based on current data from the Association of American Medical Colleges, the college ranks in the top six for its enrollment of black and Hispanic students among 136 medical schools in the country, according to a release issued by FSU on Wednesday.

According to the association, Meharry, Morehouse and Howard lead FSU in the enrollment of black medical students.

The college has produced 106 black physicians and 135 of Hispanic descent since its inception 15 years ago.

"Our numbers are a reflection not of chance, but of design," said John Fogarty, dean of the FSU College of Medicine. "We have a very specific mission to produce more physicians for Florida's underserved communities, urban and rural, and we know that the only way to do that is to bring in students who are more likely to practice in those areas one day."

In Florida, 40 percent of the population — but only 21 percent of the physician workforce — is black or Hispanic, according to the U.S. Census Bureau and the Florida Department of Health.

The association also rates Florida State as one of the top programs in the nation in the category of preparing a diverse physician workforce, FSU said.

From 1980 to 2012, only 17 AAMC medical schools (none of them in Florida) graduated 350 or more black or African-American physicians, and only 17 (including four in Puerto Rico) graduated more than 400 Latino or Hispanic physicians.

"We are on pace to exceed those numbers in a shorter time frame," Fogarty said, noting that the college only reached its full enrollment five years ago.

The AAMC's Missions Management Tool also rates Florida State among the top 10 percent of medical schools nationwide for its percentage of graduates who are African-American. At the same time, Florida State rates as one of the top 15 percent of schools for percentage of graduates who are Hispanic.

The university itself also is benefitting from programs it has created to increase the number of minority students it attracts to the medical college. This year, the university ranked eighth in the country for the number of its black graduates accepted into medical schools.

The College of Medicine has instituted initiatives such as its Undergraduate — SSTRIDE (Science Students Together Reaching Instructional Diversity and Excellence) program and the Minority Association of Pre-Medical Students.

A key part of the college's mission is to produce doctors willing to work in rural communities, where there often is a dearth of family practice physicians.

National studies have shown a disproportionate number of minority physicians and other health professionals serve minority and other medically underserved populations.

At the same time, minority patients tend to receive better interpersonal care from practitioners of their own race or ethnicity, particularly in primary care and mental health settings.

Non-English-speaking patients, particularly in mental health facilities, experience better interpersonal care, greater medical comprehension, and a greater likelihood of keeping follow-up appointments when they see a practitioner who understands their language, studies have shown.

“I think that diversity has moved from what I’d say was an important issue to an urgent issue,” said Marc Nivet, the AAMC’s chief diversity officer. “Clearly, there’s something good that’s happening at Florida State. It’s a fantastic message that should be shared with all medical schools because we all could learn from that.”

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Infobox:

Here are some facts on the FSU College of Medicine according to the Association of American Medical Colleges’ Missions Management Tool, 2016:

Percentage of graduates between academic years 2008-09 and 2013-14 who are Black or African-American:

- 10.2 percent, above the 90th percentile among U.S. medical schools

Percentage of graduates between academic years 2008-09 and 2013-14 who are Hispanic or Latino:

- 12.6 percent, just below the 90th percentile among U.S. medical schools

Percentage of full-time faculty who are Hispanic or Latino, American Indian or Alaska Native, Black or African-American, or Hawaiians or Pacific Islanders, as of Dec. 31, 2014:

- 11.5 percent, above the 80th percentile among U.S. medical schools.

ACCORDING TO THE FSU COLLEGE OF MEDICINE:

Class of 2016, among 119 students who just graduated:

- 17 Hispanic/Latino.
- 16 African-American/black.

Class of 2020, among 121 students in the newest class:

- 19 African-American/black.
- 10 Hispanic/Latino.

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