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OCTOBER 2007

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A cooperative program between Florida State and IRCC has brought medical students to the Treasure Coast with the hope that they will stay and practice here

BY SUE-ELLEN SANDERS

Molly. Tessa. Erica. Ellen. Irmanie. Kim. Leslie. Uchenna. Smart and pretty, young and enthusiastic, they are the next generation of physicians.

The eight Florida State University medical students who moved to the Treasure Coast this summer are already making their mark in the world. They constitute the FSU School of Medicine's first class of medical students at the Fort Pierce campus of Indian River Community College.

The Fort Pierce campus is the latest of six locations, including Daytona Beach, Pensacola, Sarasota, Orlando and Tallahassee, where FSU medical students can receive community-based training in their third and fourth years of medical school. Now housed in temporary quarters at IRCC's Health Sciences Building, the program's temporary offices now overlook construction of the permanent home of the FSU campus, expected to be completed next summer.

This community-based education model, begun at FSU in 2001, is different from traditional medical schools, typically affiliated with large teaching hospitals where students spend their third and fourth years. Although used by only about a dozen of the nation's 125 accredited medical schools, it has a successful track record. The community-driven commitment of the students is just one reason why.

Erica Lindsay, left, and Uchenna Ikediobi review X-rays at Martin Memorial South with internist Dr. Daniel Edelman. At right, the third-year students spend Wednesday afternoons in classrooms learning and reviewing what they've seen during the week.

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Maureen (Molly) and Theresa (Tessa) McKenna are twins from Pompano Beach, who have spent the last three months shadowing local doctors. Instead of waiting until their residency years to visit actual patients, the young women, along with their classmates, spend four and a half days a week seeing patients at doctors' offices, local hospitals and walk-in clinics. On Wednesdays, they spend half the day in 'doctoring' classes, studying case studies and topics that relate to this year's lessons.

Before they moved to Port St. Lucie, the McKennas volunteered with under-served and needy populations abroad in Haiti, Uganda and

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the Dominican Republic, forming a non-profit organization, Share One Pair, to collect shoes for men, women and children in Haiti. "A pair of shoes can help kids remain in school, instead of being home sick and can keep fathers and mothers at work, helping them to feed their family. A pair of shoes taken for granted in our closet can be a true blessing to another family," says Molly KcKenna. Together with their mother, they've shipped 4,500 pairs of shoes to Haiti.

The sisters are concerned with needs here at home as well. Tessa's call to action? "Forty million Americans don't have health insurance. We need to find a way to help them." Both students hope to specialize in working with infectious

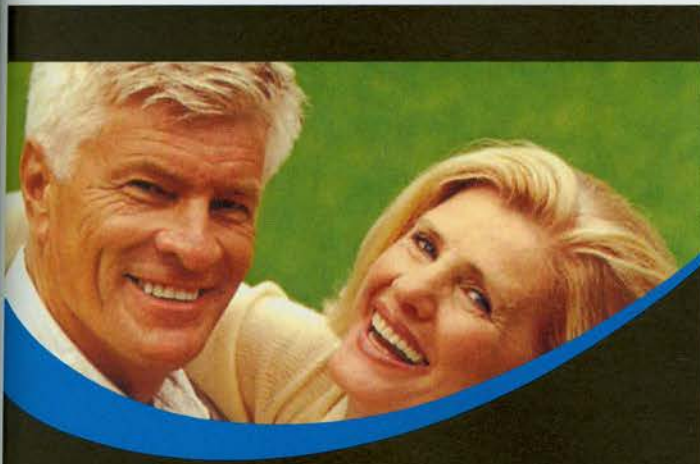
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FSU student Irmanie Eliacin, top, talks to a patient as she reviews his chart under the supervision of Fort Pierce internist Dr. Ian Boykin. Sisters Molly, left, and Tessa McKenna, above, compare notes before the Wednesday afternoon session begins.



FSU med student Ellen Abellana gets briefed by general surgeon Dr. Roshan Singh before a surgical case at Lawnwood Medical Center in Fort Pierce.



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and tropical diseases, especially with Florida's migrant population.

Miamian Erica Lindsey always knew she wanted to be a caregiver, but volunteering in college for the Shriners Children's Hospital led her away from nursing and down the path to becoming a doctor. Children motivate her and she is dedicated to making the world a better place for them.

Uchenna grew up in Nigeria, where she witnessed disparities and inadequacies in health care every day. She's founded Students Interested in Global Health to give students a global perspective on health-care delivery in developing nations. During one trip to Ghana, while volunteering at a local teaching hospital, Uchenna watched a patient die when the

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From left, Drs. Judy Linger, Prasad Chalasani and William Hood meet with Dr. Randall Bertolette, dean of the Fort Pierce campus of FSU's College of Medicine.



medical equipment that might have saved his life sat idle and unused because no one knew how to use it.

"Sometimes what people in developing nations need is not free medications and supplies. More often what they need in Ghana and places like it, is knowledge," she says.

Each of the other young women-- Ellen Abellana, Irmanie Eliacin, Leslie Haney and Kimberly Thorton—are dedicated to their future helping people.

Although only eight students began the program this summer, eventually the Fort Pierce regional campus will host up to 20 third-year medical students and 20 fourth-year students. At full capacity, FSU also expects to have 150-200 Treasure Coast physicians on faculty.

"It's definitely a win-win experience for both the students and the physicians," says Dr. Randall Bertollette, dean of the Fort Pierce regional campus, who practiced pediatrics in Vero Beach for 28 years before becoming dean. "There's never been a medical school presence in the area, and for physicians who want to teach, it's a great opportunity. It keeps them on their toes. Plus, students get real-life experience of practicing medicine in the community on a daily basis."

This is an artist's rendering of the new building on the campus of IRCC that will house FSU College of Medicine's Fort Pierce Regional Campus.

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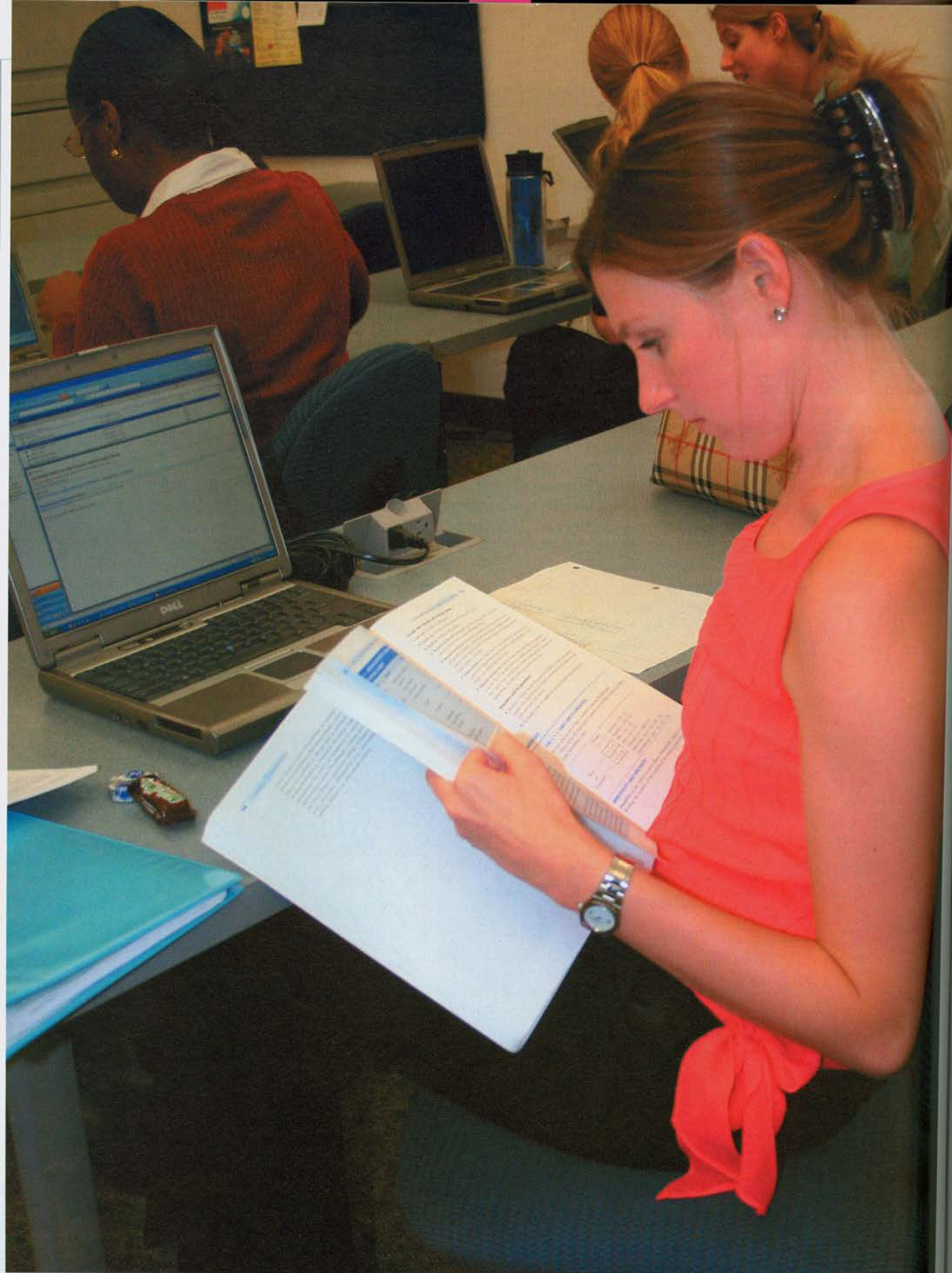
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Medical student Kimberley Thornton reviews material before her Wednesday afternoon class.

The students are now in the second of six rotations this year; each rotation lasts 6-8 weeks. During their third year of medical school, they'll rotate through internal medicine, family practice, surgery, pediatric, OB-Gyn and psychiatry, giving them a broad educational experience in all fields of medicine.

The local campus also opens the door to teach for other area physicians who've dreamed of academia. At each regional campus, medical students spend time with local physicians, who serve as clerkship faculty and mentors, shadowing them as they see patients at their offices, in hospitals and other medical facilities along the Treasure Coast. Their days are spent in physicians' offices, walk-in clinics and hospitals; their nights are spent studying.

FSU's intent is growing new doctors who will plant their roots in Florida. "These are young people we want to stay on the Treasure Coast. Studies show that often medical students will want to live where they've trained—they've made lasting relationships and formed bonds," says Bertolette. "We're hoping that more residency slots will be approved by the Legislature, so after spending two years here, the medical students can continue training in-state during their residency." *RB*



Medical Students Erica Lindsay, left, and Uchenna Ikediobi review patient charts with Dr. Daniel Edelman at Martin Memorial South.

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