

# Commentary: Your medical professional might be more than a doctor - try teacher



(Brian Cassella / Chicago Tribune)

By **Michael Muszynski**  
My Word columnist

MARCH 27, 2018, 6:15 PM

**N**ext time you're in your doctor's waiting room, check out the walls. You might see a framed certificate proclaiming that your doctor is also a teacher.

That means she was outstanding enough for us to invite her to join our faculty. It also means her medical knowledge is up-to-date — because inserting an always-questioning medical student into your practice keeps you on your toes.

No one appreciates this community's physician/teachers more than we do at the Orlando campus of the **Florida State University** College of Medicine. This medical school wouldn't exist without them — because our program is built on their shoulders.

We have a full-time faculty of about 150 medical doctors and those holding doctorates at Florida State's main campus, and they do most of the teaching during the first and second years. Then they confidently hand off our

students to doctors who didn't necessarily set out to become teachers.

At our six regional campuses across the state, and our three clinical training sites in Marianna, Immokalee and Thomasville, Ga., our third- and fourth-year students immerse themselves in community medicine. In effect, they become your doctor's apprentice — and part of your medical team. Along the way, with careful supervision, they experience firsthand the life of a community physician.

That sounds like a lot of work for the mentor. Why would your doctor sign up?

That question haunted the creators of this medical school nearly 20 years ago. They knew this student-centered, one-on-one, hands-on approach made perfect sense on paper — but what if the community's physicians wouldn't buy into hours of extra effort with minimal financial compensation?

As it turned out, they jumped at the chance. Around the state, we have more than 2,600 part-time faculty members ready to mentor our students in family medicine, internal medicine, obstetrics-gynecology, pediatrics, emergency medicine, general surgery, geriatrics, and psychiatry. Here at the Orlando campus, we have 660. Mentoring energizes them, the doctors say, and makes them better physicians. And because the stable of teachers is so large, no single physician needs to take on too great a load.

How well are these teachers doing? Our students are meeting or exceeding national averages in standardized exams, and are annually being accepted into prestigious residency programs across the country. Nearly 600 are now in practice, and more than 300 are practicing in Florida. In fact, statewide, more than 60 College of Medicine alumni are now part of our faculty.

On Friday, National Doctors Day, we will toast them and all of the physicians who play such a key role in our students' success.

*Michael Muszynski, M.D., is dean of the Florida State University College of Medicine's Orlando Regional Campus.*

Copyright © 2018, Orlando Sentinel

**This article is related to:** [Colleges and Universities](#), [Drugs and Medicines](#), [Florida State University](#)