

PRESS RELEASE

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Outreach Program Makes Impression with Class of 2010

TALLAHASSEE, FL - Nine of the 94 graduates in the Class of 2010 at the Florida State University College of Medicine got their introduction to medical school as part of an extensive outreach program aimed at creating a diverse student body. The students, including Uchenna Ikediobi and Jimmy Moss, are part of a diverse graduating class that includes 12 African-Americans (13 percent of the class). In Florida, less than 5 percent of practicing physicians are African-American, while African-Americans make up 14 percent of the population. Overall, 19 percent of the Class of 2010 is from a background considered to be underrepresented in medicine. During Saturday's ceremony, degrees also were awarded in a new major: Master of Biomedical Sciences – Bridge to Clinical Medicine. Ten students received the Bridge to Clinical Medicine diploma and all 10 have been accepted as part of the medical school's Class of 2014, which begins its first semester in June. Of the 10 Bridge students, six are African-American and two are Hispanic. At the FSU College of Medicine, outreach programs have been in place since long before the school was founded after the spring 2000 legislative session. Originally, outreach programs were created to bolster efforts to identify students from medically underserved backgrounds who were entering medical school as part of the Program in Medical Sciences (PIMS). The major components of the outreach effort are SSTRIDE and the Bridge program. SSTRIDE (Science Students Together Reaching Instructional Diversity and Excellence) is an educational pipeline that provides continuing academic support and assistance to students in grades 7 through college. The pipeline consists of several components designed to assist in student development, academic achievement and community involvement. SSTRIDE seeks to increase the number of underrepresented students, such as minority and rural students, in medical school and other science fields. In addition, SSTRIDE reinforces the ideal of service to others and seeks to foster interest in primary care, geriatric medicine and underserved populations, with emphasis on the accompanying cultural and medical needs. Class of 2010 graduate Ikediobi became a SSTRIDE participant as a ninth-grader at Rickards High School in Tallahassee. She also served as a mentor in the program. Moss, whose family was temporarily homeless when he was young and who overcame many obstacles before earning his M.D., credits the College of Medicine's outreach program for encouraging him to even consider medical school. "I immersed myself in all that SSTRIDE had to offer," Moss said. "From becoming the vice president of its undergraduate organization, the Multicultural Association of Pre-health Students (MAPS), to taking part in its numerous outreach opportunities, I have truly become a part of the SSTRIDE family. The benefit of having an emotional and structural support system during my transition from nontraditional undergraduate to nontraditional medical student is indescribable. "The greatest reward has been the doors it has opened, letting me spread my message of perseverance to inner-city youth. The school workshops and community center visits that SSTRIDE has funded let me touch the lives of kids in the same socioeconomic surroundings I once knew as a child. They also inspired me to start my own mentoring initiative, Young Male Empowerment (YME). I have been able to impact the lives of young men who maybe never knew there were options beyond the negativity of their neighborhoods. "I have nothing but praise for the role this amazing program has played in my transformation."