OHSU Expanding and Improving Rural Programs

More students doing more rotations in more disciplines throughout rural Oregon.

That's the aim of changes now underway at Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU). These changes involve both physician education within the OHSU School of Medicine and interprofessional education of nurses, dentists, doctors, pharmacists, physician assistants and public health professionals through the growing OHSU Campus for Rural Health.

Today, as in the past, every M.D. student at OHSU is required to complete at least one rural clinical experience. For over two decades, students were required to complete a Rural and Community Health clerkship, working with volunteer faculty all over the state. Now the School of Medicine is expanding and diversifying rural medical education as part of the OHSU M.D. curriculum transformation to prepare physicians for 21st century practice.

Building on the success of the Rural and Community Health clerkship, which is still available to students as an elective, new and creative clinical experiences are being developed in a variety of disciplines to allow greater individual flexibility for students and to provide a more robust physician workforce to care for Oregonians. Physicians in different specialties from rural communities around the state are stepping forward to participate. As a result, the first year of the YOUR M.D. curriculum has produced nearly 30 rural clinical experiences from which students can choose. Some of the new clinical experiences are in Oregon communities, such as McMinnville, never before available for student rotations.

The School of Medicine has further reaffirmed its commitment to rural medical education by hiring faculty in new positions to support the work needed to enrich student clinical experiences. Mark Baskerville, M.D., J.D., was recently hired as the rural elective and multidisciplinary clinical experiences director to develop and manage these new clinical experiences. Paul Gorman, M.D., was brought on last year as assistant dean for rural medical education, to serve as point person for rural programs in the School of Medicine and work with leadership in other OHSU schools to ensure the success of the Campus for Rural Health.

Led by OHSU Provost Jeanette Mladenovic, M.D., M.B.A., M.A.C.P, the statewide Campus for Rural Health supporting interprofessional education and service is already well underway: in fall 2015, the Campus was launched in Coos Bay and Klamath Falls, and new sites are under development that will eventually encompass the entire state. Headquartered in Klamath Falls, the Campus for Rural Health relies on local partnerships to advance health in rural communities and prepare a workforce for
interprofessional collaboration that will be essential to improve the health of these populations. Students occupy shared housing to promote informal relationship-building and participate in community-defined health projects that target local needs, all while completing the clinical training specific to nurses, dentists, doctors, pharmacists, physician assistants and public health professionals. Each Campus for Rural Health site is overseen by a regional associate dean, assisted by a site coordinator and community liaison, with support from leadership on the Portland campus. Ultimately, OHSU envisions all students completing interprofessional training at rural campus sites.

OHSU's rural education efforts are meant to prepare a robust interprofessional workforce that will meet the needs of rural Oregonians in the 21st century, and beyond. Drs. Gorman and Baskerville are happy to answer any and all questions about the rural medical education program in the School of Medicine; contact them at gormanp@ohsu.edu or baskervi@ohsu.edu. For questions about the OHSU Campus for Rural Health, write to provost@ohsu.edu.