LETTER FROM THE DEAN

Growing through crisis

As health care professionals, some of our greatest opportunities for growth and achievement have come in the face of crucial moments. A difficult diagnosis. A challenging patient. A split second to save a life.

This year, we joined the rest of the world in facing one of our greatest crises yet: the COVID-19 pandemic. At a time when our young Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine is still maturing into the full image of all we have dreamed and worked toward these last five years, COVID-19 had the potential to deal its blows to our success.

And yet, as we observed many of our more seasoned medical school peers struggle to swerve amidst the drastic challenges to curriculum, clinical learning, assessment, technology, and more, the strength of our newness and nimbleness in these areas was apparent.

Our technology-forward approach to medical education enabled us to quickly shift to remote learning with a student body and faculty that was familiar with working in these spaces. Our curriculum and assessment areas moved swiftly to adjust the curriculum so students could continue learning and remain on track for graduation. And our strong relationships with our clinical partners, along with extensive careful planning, enabled us to return our third- and fourth-year students to the clinical environment as safely and quickly as possible.

Of course, in addition to our great work responding to COVID-19, the College of Medicine had countless wins both prior to and during COVID-19 that are worthy of celebration. We continued to expand our pathway events and opportunities, drawing more students from the unique and diverse backgrounds we seek to have represented in our college and in our physicians across the state. And we made important strides toward growing and enhancing our diversity and inclusion work among students, faculty and staff.

Our Department of Nutrition and Exercise Physiology found creative virtual solutions to provide fitness services to the community during COVID-19 and give their students the critical hours of hands-on experience. Our Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences exposed more than 2,000 K-12 students to careers in healthcare and volunteered their expertise through multiple outreach events and speaking engagements.

Our research enterprise landed nearly $18 million in grants and contracts and made news headlines across the state and the country with their work on COVID-19, genetics, sleep, community health and dozens of groundbreaking studies that continued to elevate the visibility and reputation of our research.

Our Graduate Medical Education program received grants from the Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administration and Premera Blue Cross to begin rural residency programs including one right in the heart of Cougar country at Pullman Regional Hospital.

We launched Range Health, our non-profit academic health network that will bring health care to Washington’s rural and underserved areas; and unveiled the William A. Crosetto Mobile Health Care Unit, the network’s first traveling health clinic.

Consistent, quality growth is always a challenge. COVID-19 meant bending and flexing in ways we never imagined, while simultaneously staying the course on the many areas we have grown toward for years. Our journey is not without challenges or the need for continuous improvement, but our team is proof of how to unify around a common goal and flourish even in the most difficult times.

I look forward to another year of incredible growth at the College of Medicine, and the energy of our unyielding spirit to solve the health care challenges of Washington and beyond.

Regards,

John Tomkowiak, MD, MOL
Founding Dean
DEPARTMENT SPOTLIGHTS

Nutrition & Exercise Physiology steps up with virtual fitness during COVID-19

By Jill Wagner

When a client in the Nutrition and Exercise Physiology (NEP) Health and Fitness Clinic gathered cans of beans and bags of flour on an afternoon in March, she wasn’t looking to cook a meal for her family. Instead, she placed the items in plastic sacks and logged into a HIPAA-compliant Zoom meeting. The sacks would be her dumbbells for the day while her NEP student trainer led her through a personalized exercise routine.

The COVID-19 pandemic that hit mid-semester and required all courses at WSU Health Sciences Spokane be taught online felt sudden, yet NEP faculty responded nimbly and creatively to ensure learning experiences for both students and the community continued without interruption. Nearly all of the 60 clients reported surprise at what a good workout they could get at home with just simple equipment. Dr. Julie Larsen, clinic instructor, met regularly with students to brainstorm exercises and review fitness plans.

Educating the public through virtual platforms will likewise be a key practice for community-based registered dietitians. At WSU Extension offices, it didn’t take long after stay-at-home orders went into effect to receive dozens of calls about food preservation methods. Clinical Assistant Professor April Davis and her students in the NEP dietetics program jumped at the chance to heed the call.

The community nutrition students, who normally would have been on location completing supervised practice hours, instead paired with Extension faculty mentors to review the food preservation techniques and study adult learning theory. The students then worked in teams to develop slide decks and teaching notes about freezing/cold storage, boiling water canning, pressure canning, and drying. The new food preservation class can be taught in live or recorded online formats.

Davis noted, “I was particularly proud of the students’ willingness to adapt in an uncharted situation and their commitment to improving access to nutrition education that is geared toward communities of varying skill levels and backgrounds.”

Speech & Hearing Sciences professor launches new autism technology

By Christina VerHeul

The Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine is best known for its students in white medical coats, but the white coated scientists experimenting in labs, collecting data in clinics and hospitals, and analyzing data on computers may be the college’s biggest economic output until its students begin practicing medicine.

Led by world-class scientists studying and developing solutions to some of the nation’s most pressing health concerns including autism and addiction, the College of Medicine has been awarded more than $62 million in grants and contracts since its inception in 2015.

Recently, scientists have been venturing beyond the lab to become entrepreneurs for their ideas, partnering with private enterprise to generate new products and companies that solve some of health care’s most challenging issues.

In 2019, Dr. Georgina Lynch, assistant professor in the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences, and former WSU bioengineering and entrepreneurial studies student, Lars Neuenschwander, launched Appiture Biotechnologies, which develops handheld technology to quickly, noninvasively and objectively screen for autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in children.

Born out of research conducted by Dr. Lynch on the atypical pupillary light reflex in children with autism, Neuenschwander, along with fellow entrepreneurial studies student TJ Goble, created the handheld camera-integrated device and partnered with Dr. Lynch to develop preliminary software and hardware and an alpha prototype.

This technology will offer medical providers an objective tool for assessing ASD risk in young children as part of routine developmental exams. Provisional patents have been filed and the technology will now move into small pilot trials and collection of provider feedback in the next two years before going to market.

In addition, Dr. Lynch recently received the WSU Commercialization Gap Fund Award and the Washington Research Foundation Phase 1 Technology Commercialization Grant, each worth $50,000, to support the development of this important technology.

“I reminded students that, moving forward, training via Zoom may be a normal part of an exercise physiologist’s career.”

— DR. JULIE LARSEN

clinic instructor
ACADEMICS

Departments

- Department of Biomedical Sciences
- Department of Medical Education and Clinical Sciences
- Department of Nutrition and Exercise Physiology
- Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences
- Sleep and Performance Research Center
- Virtual Clinical Center

Degree programs/degrees offered

- Doctor of Medicine (MD)
- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Nutrition and Exercise Physiology
- Master of Science Coordinated Program in Dietetics, Nutrition and Exercise Physiology
- Master of Science (MS) in Nutrition and Exercise Physiology
- Master of Science (MS) in Speech and Hearing Sciences
- Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Speech and Hearing Sciences
- Bachelor of Science (BS) in Nutrition and Exercise Physiology
- Graduate Certificate in Leadership

ADMISSIONS

- 370 ENROLLED
- 152 SCIENTIFIC STUDIES PUBLISHED
- 140 GRANTS SUBMITTED
- 88 GRANTS AWARDED

195 TOTAL MEDICAL STUDENTS

Meet the Class of 2024:

- 60% FEMALE
- 30% RURAL CHILDHOOD COUNTY
- 32.5% FIRST GENERATION COLLEGE GRADUATE
- 52.5% LOW SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS
- 10% UNDERREPRESENTED IN MEDICINE
- 10% MILITARY
- 26 AVERAGE AGE

Meets the Class of 2024:

- 60% FEMALE
- 30% RURAL CHILDHOOD COUNTY
- 32.5% FIRST GENERATION COLLEGE GRADUATE
- 52.5% LOW SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS
- 10% UNDERREPRESENTED IN MEDICINE
- 10% MILITARY
- 26 AVERAGE AGE
From the beginning, the Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine has been dedicated to expanding medical education and access to all individuals in Washington. This effort includes making the advancement of diversity and inclusion a top priority and creating pathways for high school and college students who have an interest in medicine, especially those from population groups underrepresented in medicine.

The college launched three new pathway programs this year:

**REIMAGINE INDIANS INTO MEDICINE (RISE)**

The College of Medicine launched RISE in January 2020 and enrolled eight students to participate in the program that started in June 2020. The six-week RISE Summer Academy is held in collaboration between Oregon Health & Sciences University, Northwest Native American Center of Excellence, Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board, University of California Davis School of Medicine, and Washington State University Health Science Spokane. Due to COVID-19, the original on-campus experience was moved to distance learning. Academy participants take an MCAT preparation course via Kaplan, learn about medical school applications and admissions, are immersed in Native American Health Instruction and Cultural Tenets, and participate in supplemental Biochemistry and Immunology enhancement curriculum. 

**RISE WY’EAST PATHWAY**

As part of the January 2020 launch of RISE, the College of Medicine started the Wy’east Pathway, in which up to four scholars who are enrolled members of federally recognized tribes and meet the residency entry requirements for the college are selected to attend the pathway. The College of Medicine interviewed and accepted two scholars who will attend the Wy’east post-baccalaureate program at Oregon Health & Sciences University starting in September 2020. The program consists of MCAT prep, foundations of biomedical sciences, population health and health disparities, anatomy and physiology, and other academic and cultural enhancers as well as conditional acceptance to the College of Medicine in entering year 2021 upon successful completion of the pathway.

**WSU HONORS COLLEGE PATHWAY PROGRAM**

The program enrolled its first cohort of eight students in July 2020. It was created to admit highly qualified WSU Honors College students who fit the College of Medicine mission, vision, and goals. Each of the Honors College Pathway participants receive opportunities for summer-funded research with College of Medicine faculty, support for the MCAT, a peer mentor, and conditional acceptance to the College of Medicine in entering year 2022 upon successful completion of the pathway.

**Health equity and inclusion efforts**

The college continued to advance its work in diversity and inclusion in several ways this year:

- David H. Garcia’s position was renamed from Assistant Dean for Pathways and Inclusion to Assistant Dean for Health Equity and Inclusion to align with the forward vision of the college more closely. He now reports directly to Founding Dean John Tomkowiak for health equity and inclusion related efforts.
- Dr. Naomi Chaytor assumed role of Chair for the Equity Committee in June 2020. She follows Dr. Chris Davis in his instrumental tenure as Chair.
- The Inclusion Matrix Workgroup (IMW) was repurposed to include the development of a comprehensive Strategic Diversity Action Plan for the College of Medicine. The IMW is working diligently to incorporate best and emerging practices within the plan while customizing for the needs of the college and the communities we serve. The Strategic Diversity Action Plan is scheduled for completion in fall 2020.
- In May 2020, the college hosted Dr. Amer F. Ahmed as the inaugural Inclusive Excellence Scholar in Residence. Students, staff, and faculty from across the college and the state engaged in a range of sessions focused on inclusive excellence, intercultural sensitivity/communication, diversity and equity.

"It is an honor to engage the College of Medicine on its journey of being committed to creating an inclusive learning environment for all students, staff, and faculty."

— DR. AMER F. AHMED

inaugural Inclusive Excellence Scholar in Residence
Inaugural clerkship year proves longitudinal learning a success

By Jaime Bowman

In June 2019, the Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine launched the Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship (LIC) for the Class of 2021’s third year of clinical learning. The college was only the second medical school in the nation to build an LIC for all third-year clerkship students and the first to do so across four statewide community-based campuses.

Welcoming more than 500 new clinical faculty and supporting six clinical specialties, the LIC marked an important transition for the College of Medicine students. Moving from the classroom and simulated clinical environment to the real clinical environment, students began to care for real patients under the supervision of preceptors in clinics, hospitals, surgery centers, free clinics and homes all over the state.

In the LIC, students spend approximately 10 months learning by participating in the care of Washington patients. The experiences are fully integrated across the disciplines of behavioral health, family medicine, internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, and surgery. By design, the LIC prioritizes continuity of relationships so students can work with many of the same patients and physicians over time to gain a complete picture of care.

The LIC proved that relationship continuity matters. Students spent their LIC working closely with only six to 10 core preceptors each and saw nearly 70% of their patients three or more times in follow-up. Student assessments and preceptor feedback indicated that knowing the patient and knowing the team allowed the student to learn and care more. They saw patients across time, across care teams, and even across disease and wellness.

Continuity allowed students to build trust, and trust allowed them to try new skills, receive helpful feedback, and build even more skills. Many students proved their ability enough to, under supervision, assist during surgeries, deliver babies, make management decisions, obtain consent, and be of great support to their patients. A student noted, “after spending every Wednesday morning with the same surgeon, I learned how physicians function in multiple different arenas from the OR to the floor and the clinic. I learned the importance of patient-centered care, and the many social determinants of health that physicians combat in real life every day.”

— KIAH SULLIVAN
Class of 2021 MD candidate

Sullivan noted, “Families got to know me and trust me. I felt like more than just a medical student in their eyes, but a true member of their care team. It helped me get a sense of what a true doctor-patient relationship will feel like one day.”

Preceptors and members of the supervising health care teams assessed the students using direct observation. This gave students honest feedback about what knowledge and abilities they are and are not demonstrating.

“When preceptors took the time to pull me aside at the end of the day and make a comment on how my skills have progressed over time was one of the greatest feelings,” said Sullivan. “Sometimes when you are just trying to keep your head above water, it’s hard to notice the progress you make in the clinical setting over time.”

Though experiences in the LIC were dramatically redirected by COVID-19, students were still successful in making an impact in patient care. Several new faculty who met and worked with our medical students signed on to become preceptors, and many active research projects were inspired by the first year of LIC learning.
Curriculum responds rapidly to COVID
By Jaime Bowman

In late January 2020, the first American patient diagnosed with SARS-CoV-19, a novel and dangerous respiratory virus, was admitted to an airborne-isolation unit at Providence Regional Medical Center in Everett where Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine students serve as clerks on several of the hospital care teams.

In February, WSU medical students were no longer allowed to participate in caring for patients complaining of respiratory symptoms. And on March 16, just eight weeks later, the College of Medicine suspended all clinical learning involving direct patient care.

At the time of the suspension, the Class of 2021 was in the last term of their third year of training known as the Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship (LIC). The other classes were preparing to travel to their clinical campuses in Everett, Spokane, Tri-Cities and Vancouver for their clinical weeks working with physician preceptors.

On March 23, Governor Inslee signed the amended Proclamation Order “Stay Home – Stay Healthy” closing all non-essential businesses and prohibiting recreational, social, and spiritual gatherings. To assure safety for our students and faculty, the college immediately began planning and implementing the curriculum online.

The rapid transition to online and virtual learning challenged students, faculty and staff. Yet, members of the College of Medicine rose to the challenge. Community-based preceptors adjusted their disrupted clinical practices to prioritize teaching College of Medicine students in these virtual settings. Classroom faculty worked closely with education technology experts to adapt curriculum delivery. Curriculum and assessment teams collaborated to make the adjustments needed to keep students on track for graduation.

Looking forward, the MD program leaders remain in an adaptive mode, prioritizing student, faculty, preceptor, and patient safety in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic while creatively adapting curriculum delivery and assessment to optimize student learning. Our inaugural class is now actively engaged in their fourth-year clinical experiences as the health system and learning environment allows. Our second class of third-year students are working and learning at their clinical campus locations. And many of our second-year students are helping to co-create successful virtual delivery of our pre-clerkship curriculum to the Class of 2024.

The pressure of a global pandemic could have resulted in serious disruption, but the College of Medicine channeled that energy towards adaptation and innovation. As a new medical school, resilience has been critical to optimizing student learning. With the help of our community physician partners, collectively, we have risen to the challenge.

COVID-19 CURRICULAR ADAPTATIONS

First and second year students:
- During the final week of classes in winter term, students and faculty participated in virtual delivery of the curriculum to test the college’s readiness to move fully to an online delivery.
- After spring break, students returned to a fully online curriculum that allowed every student to stay home and stay safe per Governor Inslee orders.
- Second-year students participated in a virtual Clinical Campus Week with other students from their own learning community. Students explored COVID-19 topics including virology, history of prior epidemics and pandemics, public health responses, and ethical challenges of providing health care when resources are limited.
- With mentoring from third year students, first year students participated in a similar COVID-19 exploration.

Third year students:
- Students mentored first year students in their exploration of COVID-19, providing clinical context to the discussions.

Timeline of COVID impact to curriculum

2020

JANUARY
- First case in Snohomish County

FEBRUARY
- College of Medicine limits student care of at risk patients

MARCH
- College of Medicine suspends all patient care

APRIL
- “Stay Home – Stay Healthy”

MAY
- Start of virtual clerkships
Major News Stories in Research

GENETIC DISCOVERY HOLDS IMPLICATIONS FOR BETTER IMMUNITY, LONGER LIFE

By Sara Zaske

Wrinkles on the skin of a microscopic worm might provide the key to a longer, healthier life for humans.

Working with Caenorhabditis elegans, a transparent nematode found in soil, researchers at the Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine were the first to find that the nervous system controls the tiny worm’s cuticle, a skin-like exterior barrier, in response to bacterial infections. Their study was published in Science Advances.

Often used in biologic research as a model organism, the C. elegans nematode has a relatively simple structure while still sharing several genetic similarities with more complex mammals including humans, so this discovery holds implications for human health as well.

“A physical barrier such as a worm’s cuticle or a human’s skin prevents pathogens from entering the body. Our study challenges the traditional view that physical barrier defenses are not a response to infections but are part of the body’s basic innate defense pathogens,” said Assistant Professor Jingru Sun, the corresponding author on the paper. “We show that during infection the nematode can change its cuticle structure and that defense response is controlled by the nervous system.”

Sun and her colleagues used technologies such as gene silencing and CRISPR gene editing to show that a G-protein-coupled receptor tied to a gene called npr-8 regulates collagens, proteins that are the key structural components of the nematode’s cuticle. Nematodes whose NPR-8 receptor was removed survived longer when exposed to the pathogens that cause pneumonia, salmonella and staph infections. The cuticle of the nematodes without the receptor also remained smoother compared to their wild peers whose cuticles wrinkled in response to the same pathogens.

“For nematodes, it’s important to maintain a healthy cuticle that acts as the first line of defense against external insults,” said Durai Sellegounder, lead author on the paper and a postdoctoral researcher in Sun’s Lab. “Many pathogens produce wicked proteins that try to destroy this barrier and establish infection. Our results show that the nervous system can detect these attacks and respond by remodeling or strengthening this protective structure.”

Collagens are the most abundant proteins found in mammals, and declining collagen levels are associated with aging. For humans, collagen loss can create more problems than just unsightly wrinkles. The study results indicate that collagens play an important role in defense of pathogen infection, and the researchers speculate that the neural regulation of collagens might play a role in overall longevity as well. Their next goal is to understand the underlying defense response mechanisms.
RESEARCH

SKIPPING ONE NIGHT OF SLEEP MAY LEAVE INSOMNIACS TWICE AS IMPAIRED

By Judith Van Dongen

Research conducted by scientists in the WSU Sleep and Performance Research Center, part of the Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine, showed that individuals with chronic sleep onset insomnia who pulled an all nighter performed up to twice as bad on a reaction time task as healthy normal sleepers. Their findings were published in the online journal Nature and Science of Sleep.

Poor daytime functioning is a frequent complaint among those suffering from insomnia, said lead author Devon Hansen, assistant professor in the College of Medicine and a researcher in the WSU Sleep and Performance Research Center. However, previous studies have found that their daytime cognitive performance is not significantly degraded, seemingly suggesting that it is a perceived issue that does not reflect a real impairment. The study of individuals with sleep onset insomnia revealed that the impairment may in fact be real but hidden during the normal day—yet exposed after pulling an all nighter, which impacted them much more than age matched control subjects.

The finding caught the research team by surprise. “There has been a theory about what perpetuates insomnia that focuses on hyperarousal, an activation in their system that keeps those with insomnia from being able to wind down when they go to bed,” Hansen said. “We thought that this hyperarousal would protect them to some extent and had hypothesized that their performance after a night of total sleep deprivation would be better than normal healthy sleepers. Instead, we found the exact opposite.”

Hansen, who in a previous career worked as a therapist in a sleep clinic, said the study adds credibility to insomnia patients’ experiences. She also said it serves as a warning to poor sleepers that they should try to maintain a regular sleep schedule and avoid pushing their limits by staying up all night.

The research team studied 14 volunteer participants. Half of the group consisted of individuals who had chronic sleep onset insomnia, the inability to fall asleep within 30 minutes for at least three nights a week for more than three months. The other half were healthy normal sleepers who served as controls. The two groups of participants were matched in age, with all participants aged between 22 and 40 and an average age of 29 for both groups.

Participants spent a total of five days and four nights in the sleep laboratory. They could sleep normally during the first two nights. They were kept awake the next night and following day—totaling 38 hours of total sleep deprivation—followed by a night of recovery sleep.

During their time awake, participants completed a series of performance tasks every three hours. This included a widely used alertness test known as the psychomotor vigilance test (PVT), which measures participants’ response times to visual stimuli that appear on a screen at random intervals. The researchers analyzed PVT data for lapses of attention (i.e., slow reaction times) and false starts (i.e., responses that occur before the stimulus appears), comparing the findings between the two groups both before and during sleep deprivation.

Before sleep deprivation, the insomnia group’s performance on the PVT looked very similar to that of the control group. However, as soon as sleep deprivation started the researchers began to see a dramatic increase in lapses of attention and false starts in the insomnia group. At one point during the night, their performance was twice as bad as that of the healthy normal sleepers.

Hansen cautioned that since their study looked specifically at individuals with sleep onset insomnia, their findings may not hold up in other insomnia subtypes, such as sleep maintenance insomnia—which is characterized by difficulty staying asleep—and terminal insomnia—which involves early morning awakenings. She plans to repeat the study in those groups to find out.

The research suggests that even with a few hours of sleep deprivation—which people routinely experience for work or family reasons—those with sleep onset insomnia may be much more impaired than those who normally sleep well at night. This may increase their risk of errors and accidents whenever time sensitive performance is required, such as while driving or when focused on a safety critical task.

— DEVEN HANSEN
assistant professor

Our study suggests that even with a few hours of sleep deprivation—which people routinely experience for work or family reasons—those with sleep onset insomnia may be much more impaired than those who normally sleep well at night. This may increase their risk of errors and accidents whenever time sensitive performance is required, such as while driving or when focused on a safety critical task.

— DEVEN HANSEN
assistant professor
Researchers at the Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine, in partnership with MultiCare and the Spokane Regional Health District, created a COVID-19 modeling tool for health care experts locally and abroad to prepare for surges of COVID-19 cases.

The tool allows hospitals to enter the number of COVID-19 patients, the average length of hospitalization and the time it takes for the number of cases to double in a community. It then calculates the number of gloves, gowns, masks and ventilators needed to handle the anticipated cases—and shows whether a facility may have more need than capacity.

Ofer Amram and Sterling McPherson, professors in the College of Medicine, said their goal was to provide hospitals with a flexible tool that could be used for short-term preparations in a rapidly evolving outbreak scenario. They see the tool as complementary to other COVID-19 forecasting models, such as the widely cited projections from the University of Washington’s Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation.

Amram said he used the local model to produce regular reports for MultiCare and the SRHD. McPherson said they also sent reports to the Yakima County Health District and a hospital chain in Western Washington.

McPherson’s lab also introduced the tool to colleagues at the Federal University of Sao Paulo, where authorities were struggling to enforce social distancing measures. McPherson said they plan to write academic papers on how the tool has been used at Brazilian hospitals.

The tool also can be adapted for future epidemics and other types of health care crises, as well as help officials plan for the future of COVID-19 as additional waves arise.

— OFER AMRAM AND STERLING MCPHERSON professors

The Cumulative Record of New Grants & Contract Awards shows the significant contributions made by the Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine and its faculty over the years.
Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine receives HRSA grant to create new rural residency program

In July 2019, the College of Medicine received a grant for nearly $750,000 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to develop a new family medicine rural residency program at Pullman Regional Hospital.

“WSU is working closely with numerous partners to expand rural residency opportunities in eastern Washington,” said Kirk Schultz, WSU president. “This funding is an exciting step in our collective goal to address rural health care needs and solve workforce shortages by effectively training physicians to practice in, and meet the clinical needs of, populations in rural and underserved communities.”

Awarded to just 27 residency programs nationwide, the grant was a major win for the College of Medicine’s graduate medical education program at Pullman Regional Hospital.

“Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine is committed to finding creative solutions to address the rural health care needs in our state,” said John Tomkowiak, founding dean of the College of Medicine. “This grant helps us take an important step toward increasing medical residencies in the communities where they are needed most.”

The RRPD program, administered by HRSA’s Federal Office of Rural Health Policy and Bureau of Health Workforce, is part of a multi-year initiative by HRSA to expand the physician workforce in rural areas by developing new, sustainable residency programs in family medicine, internal medicine, and psychiatry.

Funds are allocated over a three-year period and have allowed for the buildup of the required educational and oversight infrastructure and hiring of a program director and program administrator. In addition, the grant will fund development of the curriculum and program infrastructure including the faculty and staff required to support the program.

“We are deeply committed to improving health care quality and access in rural and underserved communities in Washington, and a critical part of our commitment is creating residencies in these communities to increase the chance that students will remain there to practice medicine,” said John Tomkowiak, founding dean of the College of Medicine. “This grant helps us take an important step toward increasing medical residencies in the communities where they are needed most.”

Premera Blue Cross grants $5.5 million to the Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine for rural residency program

Following closely on the heels of the HRSA grant, Premera Blue Cross awarded $5.5 million in grants to the College of Medicine in July 2019 to support a new family medicine residency program at Pullman Regional Hospital and to establish new sites for graduate medical residency programs in eastern Washington.

“Premera is proud to support Washington State University in their efforts to deliver health care to remote and medically underserved communities in our state,” said Jeff Roe, President and CEO of Premera Blue Cross. “With the growing disparity between urban and rural health care access, it is critical to invest in effective, long-term solutions like rural medical residency programs and more integrated services that will help close this gap.”

Since its founding, the college has championed expanding medical education and health care access to underserved and rural communities across the state. With 100 percent of students from Washington, and an emphasis on recruiting students from the same challenging health care environments they intend to serve, the college is working to ensure students gain valuable experience in rural health care environments beginning in their undergraduate years and continuing through residency.

“Premera is committed to improving the health and well-being of our communities, particularly those that are underserved,” said Kirk Schulz, president of Washington State University. “With investments in medical education and training, motivated clinical students are better prepared to meet the unique health challenges in underserved areas, and we are thrilled that this partnership will help advance this important initiative and improve health outcomes for the communities we serve.”

The funds, allocated over four years, will allow for continuation of the program past the initial start-up period and provide support for the development of the clinical teaching environment.

Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine prepares to launch first residency program

The College of Medicine has partnered with Providence Regional Medical Center Everett to create the college’s first residency program in internal medicine. The program is slated to achieve accreditation in September 2020 and will immediately accept applications following accreditation for a June 2021 start.

The program emphasizes academic excellence throughout the training experience, offering a learning environment that balances the personal and professional needs of residents. With a mission to train compassionate, dedicated, and well-rounded general internists suited to care for rural and underserved communities throughout Washington, the residency program is committed to resident education, excellence in clinical care, and research.

Residents will complete three years in the training program with a special focus on primary care and will be integrated into an evolving value-based care model focused on care coordination, patient outcomes, caregiver satisfaction, and optimized health care.
Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine brings health equity to the community during COVID

With COVID-19 creating extensive need across the community, the College of Medicine leveraged its Community Health Equity work led by Dr. Luis Manriquez to make a difference. In partnership with the Spokane Regional Health District and the Spokane Alliance, the college worked to create a community health monitoring program to monitor people who tested positive for COVID-19.

The work was critical to reassuring patients and combating isolation for those with COVID-19, offering early warning for patients who needed to be transferred to a hospital, and addressing social issues related to COVID-19.

In addition to the monitoring program, Dr. Manriquez led a street medicine effort in collaboration with multiple local partners (Spokane Regional Health District, CHAS Health, Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners, Volunteers of America, Jewels Helping Hands, and Catholic Charities). Teams of homeless outreach coordinators, clinicians and public health officers visited encampments to screen and test for COVID-19, provide acute medical care, and establish medical and social needs follow up.

Student highlights

- SHS students educated more than 2,100 K-12 rural and culturally diverse students in Spokane and surrounding areas about careers in healthcare
- NEP students gave 3,494 hours in community nutrition programs and Spokane Public Library educational talks
- Tri-Cities med students and faculty provided medical support at the Special Olympics Washington Fall Games, and students served as ground crew at the Greater Prosser Balloon Rally
- Vancouver med students served in local free clinics, launched a weekly Women in Medicine dinner, and packed food boxes for the Clark County Food Bank
- Everett med students hosted events for homeless youth at Cocoon House and for 75 children and family members from an underserved community at the Imagine Children’s Museum

Outreach activities bring medical field to K-12 students

To inspire and connect with young future physicians, the Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine held 31 outreach events across eight counties and presented to more than 6,600 students all before mid-March when COVID-19 caused postponement of activities.

One highlight included work with students from the Coeur d’Alene tribe in Plummer, Idaho. Hosted at Lakeside High School with nearly 200 students ages 12 to 19 years old, College of Medicine students, faculty and staff provided a range of fun activities suturing, simulations in the Range Health mobile health care unit, ultrasound, phlebotomy, anatomy, and a psychiatry brain game. The event was the first time students from the tribe had partnered with the medical community to experience health career modeling.

The college’s largest and newest outreach undertaking of the year was the Stevens County Mentorship Program. Designed to serve seventh through ninth graders in four school districts (Chewelah, Valley, Springdale and Wellpinit) in Stevens County, Washington, the program introduces kids to health careers in the seventh grade, then provides mentorship through their eighth and ninth grade years along with health science curriculum. The inaugural seventh grade class with 155 students was enrolled in fall 2019 and, over the course of the year, the college delivered 21 different health engagements covering 15 health careers.

The college is now recruiting mentors to deliver hands-on engagements and case-based learning to the cohort during their eighth-grade year. Many of the students had never considered a career in health care, so the college hopes to instill a passion within the students to pursue these professions and return to serve their communities.
RANGE HEALTH

Colleges of Medicine, Nursing and Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences launch Range Health, unveil first mobile unit

October 9, 2019 marked the launch of Range Health, a non-profit academic health network designed to bring health care to Washington’s rural and underserved areas; and unveiled the William A. Crosetto Mobile Health Care Unit, the network’s first traveling health clinic.

Named for its intent to deliver care to all of Washington’s 39 counties with a nod to its rural emphasis, Range Health is a separate 501(c)(3) entity in partnership with WSU and the colleges of Medicine, Nursing and Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences. When fully operational, the organization will provide prevention and wellness strategies, as well as treatment to patients across the state, focusing on communities where health care is limited. Leveraging its network of doctors, nurses and pharmacists, Range Health will increase access to health care while serving as an interprofessional training ground for future doctors and health care providers.

“From the earliest days of the College of Medicine, we envisioned a time when we would not only educate medical students to become doctors in our rural and underserved communities but create new ways of delivering health care to the people of our state,” said John Tomkowiak, founding dean of the College of Medicine and chair of the board and ex officio director of Range Health. “Range Health fulfills this vision and, while there is a lot of work ahead to scale up, extend our reach and expand our offerings, we’re excited to take our first steps toward serving the communities that need us most.”

Range Health launched with its first mobile medical unit named for William A. Crosetto, a cattle rancher from Othello who passed away in January 2018. Known to friends as Bill, he worked with Innovia Foundation to create the William A. Crosetto Charitable Foundation to support medical education and rural health among other philanthropic interests. His legacy lives on in the William A. Crosetto Mobile Health Care Unit, which will travel to rural and underserved communities to provide primary care services, preventive health screening and education for conditions such as diabetes, cholesterol, pregnancy, STDs, asthma and more. The unit began providing services in early 2020.

“Humankind is demanding solutions that support modern health care needs. Health care must be reimagined. With Range Health, we’re signaling steps taken to our larger vision of WSU Health—our initiative to advance health care across the Pacific Northwest,” said Daryll DeWald, WSU Health Sciences vice president and chancellor. “As education becomes more and more a critical component of health, WSU Health Sciences is uniquely equipped to embrace modern health care needs.”

True to its emphasis on bringing care to communities, Range Health took its mobile unit on tour across Washington in October. Sponsored by Banner Bank, the tour traveled to the college’s clinical campus sites in Vancouver, Everett and Tri-Cities. Community members and the media attended the tour events to see the mobile unit, meet locally based WSU students, and hear from WSU and Banner Bank leadership.

Bill’s generosity in our region will have a very deep impact. Bill wanted to ensure rural residents would have access to doctors in their hometown. His legacy will allow people to age in place in the communities they love.

— SHELLY O’QUINN
CEO of Innovia Foundation
RANGE HEALTH

The legacy behind the William A. Crosetto Mobile Health Care Unit

Range Health was created to build many things: a transformed health care landscape in Washington state; a network that empowers communities to achieve health; a community that promotes well-being and brings health where you are.

The organization wouldn’t be on the road to making this vision a reality without the very first mobile health clinic: the William A. Crosetto Mobile Health Care Unit.

The mobile health unit is named after William “Bill” Crosetto, a cattle rancher from Othello who passed away in January 2018. Bill worked with Innovia Foundation to create the William A. Crosetto Charitable Foundation to support health care in rural Washington communities as well as other philanthropic interests. The Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine and Range Health was a recipient of Bill’s generosity that made his namesake mobile health care unit and its operation possible.

Bill had a long-standing passion for improving health care, particularly in rural areas facing a significant shortage in health care providers. Some of his philanthropic passion can be traced back to his well-known uncles.

His mother’s brothers were Dr. William Hutchinson, a renowned cancer researcher, surgeon and founder of the Pacific Northwest Diabetes Research Institute and Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, and Fred “Hutch” Hutchinson, a professional baseball player for the Detroit Tigers and manager who suffered from lung cancer.

Bill’s passion for health care was further honed by where he chose to make his home. Though Bill was raised in Seattle, Washington, he found his heart in rural eastern Washington when he passed through Othello in the late 1950s on a class field trip.

Today, Bill’s legacy lives on in the William A. Crosetto Mobile Health Care Unit, which will travel to rural and underserved communities to provide primary care, urgent care procedures, and preventative screening.

The mobile unit bearing his name is now rolling through the rural communities he loved and will provide the services he thought were so critically needed.

Range Health in the time of COVID-19

Since its launch in fall 2019, the Range Health team has developed a network of partnerships across northeast Washington to direct the William A. Crosetto Mobile Health Care Unit to communities without access to healthcare. Prior to COVID-19, the mobile unit took to the road and visited several of those communities to provide health screenings and other services. The team is currently completing a needs assessment for the Columbia Valley to assist in development of a future mobile unit operating from the Tri-Cities clinical campus.

Currently, Range Health is working with community partners to outfit the William A. Crosetto Mobile Health Care Unit as a mobile testing unit to help safely transition eastern Washington communities and businesses as the COVID pandemic evolves. The team will provide diagnostic point-of-care testing and antibody testing for vulnerable populations, community organizations and business partners to get the state reopened safely.
MAJOR HEADLINES

Program inspires high schoolers to explore health sciences

By AMERIE ORCHER
July 7, 2023

SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — Medicine is not a field for the squeamish.

Just ask Jesse Ryon, a high school senior from Boswell who had an up-close experience with a human cadaver last week at Washington State University's health sciences campus in Spokane.

Ryon was one of 13 high school students from predominantly rural towns across the state who came to Spokane for a weeklong camp called the Dare to Dream Health Sciences Academy. The program counts as high school credit due to the intensive work the students must do. They stayed in dorms at Gonzaga University at night but spent most of their time in the WSU campus.

WASHINGTON, D.C. (AP) — The Spokesman-Review
The Spokesman-Review

WSU Medical School, Empire Health Foundation share $10.5 million grant to expand rural health care access

WASHINGTON, D.C. (AP) — The Spokesman-Review
The Spokesman-Review

WSU study links cannabis businesses to poorer neighborhoods, as local laws limit access

WASHINGTON, D.C. (AP) — The Spokesman-Review
The Spokesman-Review

WSU unveils mobile unit that will bring doctors, medical students to rural communities that need them

WASHINGTON, D.C. (AP) — The Spokesman-Review
The Spokesman-Review
ADVANCEMENT

Give an Apple, grow a Coug doc

For the past three years Numerica Credit Union, headquartered in Spokane, has provided iPads for medical students at the Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine. This year Numerica was joined by Mike and Kathy Hambelton of Wenatchee, Wash., and Vaughn and Jill Weedman of Anacortes, Wash., to provide iPads to the 80 incoming medical students.

These generous philanthropic contributors are supporting the college’s mission to solve problems in challenging health care environments across the state of Washington. One of those solutions is to empower the next generation of Washington physicians to learn and treat patients with the same technology that is being rapidly adopted in the healthcare environments they will practice in.

The iPads foster interactive learning, provide numerous medical applications, and deliver case-based learning materials in support of a digital-first, textbook-free learning experience. Throughout their training, medical students learn how to use the iPads to enhance the patient experience, as they can show the patient any relevant diagnosis and treatment information in real-time during physician-patient conversations. During this past year, the College of Medicine was recognized as an Apple Distinguished School for its innovative approach to using iPads in the medical curriculum.

The gift of providing iPads to incoming medical students helps keep student debt as low as possible upon graduation. To learn more about our “Give an Apple, Grow a Coug doc” campaign visit medicine.wsu.edu/give. Thank you to the generous philanthropic contributors who supported the cause this year and grew 80 new Coug docs.

Giving a little love through a new tradition

I have been dreaming of the day I would receive my stethoscope since I was a young girl and today was an absolute pleasure to finally be on the receiving end. My goal is to continue to exemplify the values and mission of the College of Medicine by giving back to the community I serve as a physician.

— CLASS OF 2022 MEDICAL STUDENT

to their white coat and stethoscope sponsor

To learn more about our “Give a little love” campaign visit medicine.wsu.edu/give

$11,941,888

TOTAL GIFTS

624

TOTAL DONORS
FACULTY & STAFF ACHIEVEMENTS

Promotions & Tenure
Theodore R. Chauvin, PhD
Promotion to
CLINICAL ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
Department of Biomedical Sciences

Weimin Li, MD, PhD
Tenure and promotion to
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
Department of Biomedical Sciences

Michael McDonell, PhD
Promotion to
PROFESSOR
Department of Biomedical Sciences

Jonathan P. Wisor, PhD
Promotion to
PROFESSOR
Department of Biomedical Sciences

5 YEARS
Phil Boal
Megan Chastain
Eugene Kim
Jason Gerstner
Christopher Hayworth
Keira Honn
Jenna McDonald
Radha Nandagopal
Kristan Singletary
Jingru Sun

15 YEARS
Susan Hecker
Chris Booker Sarwine

Awards
A-B-C-D (ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY)
Jaswinderpal “Jas” Sandhu, MD
Clinical Assistant Professor, Medical Education and Clinical Sciences, Vancouver; Division Chief Specialty, PeaceHealth Medical Group

ENTREPRENEURAL EXCELLENCE
Georgina Lynch, PhD
Assistant Professor, Speech & Hearing Sciences

EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING
Crystal Lederhos Smith, PhD
Assistant Research Professor

HONORING LEADERSHIP AND MENTORSHIP
Jason Gerstner, PhD
Assistant Professor, Biomedical Sciences

OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
Clinical Coordinators Team:
Kari Mikesell
Clinical Coordinator, 3rd Year, Everett

Katie Wood, MS
Clinical Coordinator, 4th Year, Everett

Genesis Dashewell
Preceptorship Coordinator, Spokane

Michelle Madeen
Clinical Coordinator, 4th Year, Spokane

Phil Boal, MA
Clinical Coordinator, 3rd Year, Tri-Cities

Sharon Livernois, MSA
Clinical Coordinator, 4th Year, Tri-Cities

Danielle Stinson
Clinical Coordinator, 3rd Year, Vancouver

Nathalie Dart
Clinical Coordinator, 4th Year, Vancouver

OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO RESEARCH OR SCHOLARSHIP
Oladunni Oluwoye, PhD
Research Assistant Professor, Behavioral Health Innovations

THE FOUNDING DEAN’S AWARD FOR CONTRIBUTION TO OUR CULTURE
Bethany Fruci
Principal Assistant to Vice Dean John Roll

April Davis, MS
Clinical Assistant Professor, Nutrition & Exercise Physiology

Clinical Coordinators Team:
Kari Mikesell
Clinical Coordinator, 3rd Year, Everett

Katie Wood, MS
Clinical Coordinator, 4th Year, Everett

Genesis Dashewell
Preceptorship Coordinator, Spokane

Michelle Madeen
Clinical Coordinator, 4th Year, Spokane

Phil Boal, MA
Clinical Coordinator, 3rd Year, Tri-Cities

Sharon Livernois, MSA
Clinical Coordinator, 4th Year, Tri-Cities

Danielle Stinson
Clinical Coordinator, 3rd Year, Vancouver

Nathalie Dart
Clinical Coordinator, 4th Year, Vancouver