

OHSU, OSU, Samaritan health explore expanding OHSU medical education to Corvallis

by Bend Weekly News Sources

OHSU School of Medicine is working to develop partnerships with entities statewide to increase its capacity to train more physicians, encourage them to practice in Oregon. Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) signed a letter of understanding with Oregon State University (OSU) and Samaritan Health Services, Corvallis, Ore., to examine new resources and opportunities for training medical students in Oregon and to address the impending work force shortage. The signing took place Wednesday in the Oregon Capitol. Governor Ted Kulongoski, Oregon Sen. Frank Morse and Rep. Sara Gelser spoke, as did OHSU President Joe Robertson, M.D., M.B.A., OSU President Edward Ray, Ph.D., and Samaritan Health Services President and Chief Executive Officer Larry Mullins, D.H.A. Since 2004 OHSU also has been collaborating with the University of Oregon and PeaceHealth Oregon Region to educate more medical students and increase Oregon's physician work force. Oregon's serious physician shortage, especially in rural and underserved areas, is predicted to peak between 2015 and 2020. As Oregon's only medical school, it is imperative that OHSU graduate more physicians to meet Oregon's future needs," said Robertson, a national leader in physician work force shortage issues. "By expanding our current program and creating regional campuses, we plan to increase the medical school entering class size by almost one-third. In so doing, we create tangible benefits -- economic, academic and social -- and we gain new partners and new opportunities to both fulfill and enhance understanding of all aspects of our mission, including research, healing and patient care." Robertson, Ray and Mullins will partner to help solve the looming physician work force shortage. This partnership will allow a group of OHSU medical students to receive some aspects of their preclinical and clinical training at OSU and Samaritan Health Services in Corvallis. "Samaritan Health has seen real success in partnering with higher education institutions to help develop and maintain a high-quality work force in our region. We are looking forward to applying what we have learned to this new collaboration between our three organizations," said Mullins. "This new educational collaborative builds on our strong partnership with OHSU in pharmacy and a number of major research projects," said OSU President Ed Ray. "Together we can have a significant impact on the training of medical students to meet the health care needs of the people of Oregon. We are very pleased to contribute to the education of medical students in Corvallis and know that they will contribute to the quality of other programs on campus." Members from OHSU, OSU and Samaritan Health will meet for the next few months to discuss these concepts and develop a formal business plan for the Corvallis program. The OHSU School of Medicine has incrementally increased the size of its medical program entering class from 100 in 2001 to 120 in 2006, the maximum number of first-year students the OHSU Marquam Hill Campus can accommodate. That number should be closer to 200, explains Robertson, which would still be 15 percent to 20 percent too short based on a recent report by the Association of American Medical Colleges. OHSU leaders are considering multiple approaches for boosting the number of health care providers in the state. These include the development of a more decentralized, community-based educational model with the addition of new program and clinical rotation opportunities in collaboration with other educational institutions and health systems around the state; the creation of new research opportunities for medical students; and the development of interdisciplinary programs with other health professional and engineering schools. The OHSU Rural Scholars program is one new approach to increasing the number of physicians practicing in non-urban areas of Oregon. The program seeks to recruit students who have an interest and an aptitude for practicing in small communities. "With the OHSU Rural Scholars program, all OHSU medical students complete one rural rotation in their third year. A special curriculum for the rural scholars allows them to receive a substantial amount of their medical education and to complete several clinical rotations outside the urban area," said OHSU Provost Lesley Hallick, Ph.D. OHSU, in partnership with local health care providers, is developing fellowships, workshops and other forms of continuing medical education courses to facilitate continued growth and development of the graduates of this program, to encourage these physicians to practice in underserved communities, and to assist communities in their efforts to retain health care providers. "We're excited for the School of Medicine to extend its reach in this way. Partnering with local physicians, regional health systems and other universities not only lets us educate more physicians for Oregon, it also brings related economic, social and health care benefits to participating communities," said Mark Richardson, M.D., M.B.A., dean, OHSU School of Medicine.

