PREPARING TOMORROW’S DOCTORS

No matter what area of medicine they choose to practice and no matter where they live in the world, the graduates of the UMKC School of Medicine will be impacted by the critical issues facing global health today. It is imperative that we prepare our students for these challenges and opportunities by arming them with an understanding of the diseases and health care delivery systems that are central to global health and the cultural and environmental factors that influence the practice of medicine in countries around the world.

We know that one of the best ways to help tomorrow’s doctors be engaged, empowered and influential health care practitioners is to give them the chance to learn and work in other countries through our school’s international medicine program.

The School of Medicine has had an international medicine program almost since the school’s inception, a testament to our pioneering approach to educating physicians. Most medical schools today encourage their students to gain an understanding in global health, but we launched our visionary program decades ago.

In 1976, faculty-led student travel groups visited countries in Europe, Asia and the Middle East, forging collaborative agreements with numerous international universities. In 2002, we formally established an Office of International Medicine. Through this program, we have been able to further promote awareness of global health issues, expand our international medicine opportunities, increase the number of affiliations with international medical schools and provide students with more opportunities to experience medical training programs in different countries.

Since 2004, well over 100 fifth- and sixth-year students have participated in approved clinical international electives in 27 countries, and 42 international students have experienced clinical academic training at UMKC. But the impact of this amazing program doesn’t end at graduation. Nearly 50 percent of our alumni who participated in our international medicine program were so profoundly affected by their experience that they continue to do international humanitarian projects today.

Now it’s time for us to take this vital program to the next level. As the world becomes a smaller place, global health issues have a more profound impact on us all. Now more than ever before, it’s critical that we take the steps necessary for the international medicine program to meet its full potential. Our vision is to develop a comprehensive curriculum in global health, introduce additional service learning and didactic opportunities for interprofessional student learning, and host an annual multidisciplinary international medicine conference at UMKC.
Taking these essential steps now will uniquely prepare our graduates to play active roles in safeguarding the health of their own patients while also contributing to better global health, no matter what area of medicine they pursue or where they choose to practice. They will have the opportunity to forge alliances with global health groups that will benefit not only their patients, but the community at large. And, as our international medicine program gains more visibility, it will raise the stature of the School of Medicine and of UMKC, further spotlighting the important work we do here.

THE PROJECT

The School of Medicine will undertake a $250,000 fundraising initiative to develop and expand the Office of International Medicine, transforming it into a multidisciplinary program that fosters understanding of and solutions to global health issues.

Funds will support medical student clinical rotations in other countries during the students’ fifth and sixth years, providing them with invaluable service learning experiences in different cultures and exposing them to unique issues in global health care. The high cost of traveling to these international service opportunities is largely borne by the students, who are already shouldering the cost of medical school. Thus we would like to grow our travel support fund to provide more grants and scholarships to students for whom travel expenses are a major barrier to participation.

We also seek funding to develop an international health curriculum for the school. Our goal is to expand the current program, which now centers on short-term student travel experiences, into a comprehensive course that covers various aspects of international health. Coursework would begin during a student’s first year and culminate with an international service learning experience. Participating students would receive a special designation on their diploma noting their advanced training. To build the program to this level, we will need staff and faculty support for program oversight, curriculum development, and teaching.

In the future, we plan to develop an annual multidisciplinary international medicine conference, which would bring national and international speakers and participants to Kansas City to teach

PROJECT IMPACT

- Expanding the International Medicine Program will give UMKC and the School of Medicine the powerful opportunity to brand a signature program that has broad appeal to students, faculty, alumni and the Kansas City community.

- An expanded international health program will help UMKC forge significant community relationships, which will help further raise awareness of and support for all our innovative programs.

- A combination of intensive classroom instruction in global health issues and hands-on experience practicing medicine in locations all around the world will allow students to hone their medical skills and gain a deeper understanding of the complex political and economic issues related to global health.

- As our medical students investigate other countries’ health care systems, they gain a global perspective on health care delivery that they can use in developing successful medical practices that benefit our entire community.
and learn about global health. Such a symposium would expose even more UMKC students to issues in global health and further establish Kansas City as a hub of medical and scientific discovery with a profound impact on the global community. The International Medicine Program is already engaging students, faculty and alumni in the rapidly emerging area of global health. Now is the time for the program to reach its full potential by instituting a comprehensive curriculum in global health care and hosting nationally acclaimed symposia in international health.

Every day, the school strives to live out our mission of providing and fostering excellence, innovation and scholarship in education, research and medical care. One way we can accomplish these goals is by expanding our international medicine program. Private support will allow a greater number of students to engage in international service learning experiences, returning with a new perspective on the role they must play to impact global health care.

FULFILLING THE VISION

The International Medicine Program stands at a critical crossroads. In order for this program to meet its full potential, empowering tomorrow’s physicians to have a positive impact on global health care, it is critical that we take steps right now. This is the time to prepare physicians to take their place in the global health care community, using their skills and knowledge to safeguard the health of patients, both in their own country and abroad.