UMKC’S SCHOOL OF MEDICINE TRAINING FACILITY: EQUIPPING TOMORROW’S DOCTORS WITH EXCEPTIONAL SKILLS

GAINING EXPERIENCE

Every day doctors are called upon to make quick but careful decisions regarding the health of their patients and to skillfully perform medical procedures in what are sometimes life-and-death situations. In order to do so with confidence and competence it’s essential that medical students master these skills in a safe environment where the stakes are low, so that when they are called upon to execute them on the job, they can do so masterfully.

That’s why at the UMKC School of Medicine, our medical school students, residents and fellows spend hundreds of hours training in the Youngblood Medical Skills Lab, practicing and perfecting the host of skills they will need. The skills lab provides a safe place for them to participate and learn, gaining experience with procedures before attempting them with live patients. In this controlled environment they will encounter everything from the everyday situations doctors commonly face to unusual, high-risk medical events they may only see a few times in their practice. And they will be prepared to handle both with confidence.

Students begin using the skills lab early in their medical school training, working on low-level simulators to learn tasks like starting IVs and tying surgical knots. In mid-level simulation exercises they use the trainers under more challenging circumstances, negotiating scenarios where a patient might need to be intubated. During high fidelity simulations, students are faced with medical challenges that will test and even try their abilities, forcing them to act quickly and accurately to achieve a positive outcome.

Our lifelike manikin trainers, which include three adult male simulators, one adult female and one baby, can be programmed to present a number of health care challenges for students to navigate, from heart attacks to breach births. In addition, students are presented with “standardized patient” scenarios in which live actors are used to portray a condition or work simultaneously with a simulator. The result? Students learn how to keep cool and work efficiently as they confidently resolve the issues they will face as a practicing health care provider.

Since the skills lab opened in 2007, its usage has skyrocketed. The lab is not only in high demand by our medical students, residents, fellows and faculty, it’s also heavily used by community members undergoing Advanced Cardiac Life Support and Basic Life Support
training and by practicing physicians who want to master new technologies or accrue continuing education hours.

As a result, the skills lab has outgrown its small space, originally designed as a pharmacy dispensary. The current cramped space is limiting the outreach of our program by greatly restricting the number of individuals who may simultaneously use the lab. In addition, the current lab has inadequate storage space and limited video recording technology critical for proper observation and analysis of simulation exercises.

The time has come for the skills lab to move to a newer, larger, more accessible facility that can accommodate the greater number of health care professionals who need this invaluable experience in order to become skilled physicians.

THE PROJECT

The School of Medicine will undertake a $1 million fundraising initiative to create a new Clinical Training Facility to house the Youngblood Medical Skills Lab and other programs. The new facility will accommodate more simulation bays that are equipped with technologically advanced simulation training equipment so that a growing number of medical students and health care providers can benefit from this exceptional learning opportunity.

Currently, the skills lab is housed in a retrofitted space located in the basement of the School of Medicine building. While the space was adequate in the skills lab’s start-up years, the steady increase in demand from students, faculty, community members and practicing physicians has caused us to outgrow its capacity. It is time for us to move the skills lab into a new home that can accommodate this growing, dynamic program.

PROJECT IMPACT

- New doctors who graduate from the UMKC School of Medicine must be able to hit the ground running, providing patients with expert care immediately. Our newly expanded skills lab will give our students more opportunity to train on simulators, honing their health care skills so they are confident and capable their first day working.

- The UMKC School of Medicine has long been a recognized innovator in medical education. Expanding the Youngblood Medical Skills Lab into the new Clinical Training Facility will contribute to our stellar reputation for providing a progressive education for our students.

- Top medical students, residents and fellows who are recruited by the very best medical schools in the nation are drawn to programs that offer them the chance to work with advanced technology. Our investment in a high-tech medical skills lab will enable us to recruit even more outstanding students to our program.

- This expanded, re-envisioned space will allow us to grow our program further, offering distance learning opportunities, debriefing and other didactic instructional activities.

- The re-engineered space will improve interdisciplinary training and future patient outcomes through multiple medical practitioners working together and understanding the varying roles of others before graduating and working in the health care system.
Our plan is to convert an empty building across the street from the School of Medicine into the new Clinical Training Facility. Currently, the approximately 6,000-square-foot space is only a shell and will require a complete build-out to transform it into a state-of-the-art facility.

Once finished, the new Clinical Training Facility, including the Youngblood Medical Skills Lab, will be large enough to accommodate multiple users simultaneously, allowing a greater number of individuals and groups to access this incredible teaching tool at one time. In addition, the new lab will be equipped with a greater number of skills and simulation trainers, including virtual modalities of training.

FULFILLING THE VISION
The skills training program stands at a critical crossroads. In the few short years the Youngblood Medical Skills Lab has been in operation, it has produced dramatic results. Students, interns, fellows, faculty and even practicing doctors rely on this invaluable teaching experience to improve their skills.

As our program has grown in size and stature, it has exceeded the capacity of our small space in the medical school basement. So it is time for the skills lab to find a home that provides the size and accessibility necessary for it to meet its full potential.

Today, we have the opportunity to completely transform an unused space on the health sciences campus into a state-of-the-art skills lab facility that will accommodate the leading-edge work we do. To do so, we need forward-thinking partners who want to ensure tomorrow’s doctors have the opportunity to utilize today’s best teaching tools in order to provide the best of care for our community in the future.

Medical students who work with patient simulators have better technical skills, improved critical thinking skills, stronger decision-making ability and more developed communication skills than those who have not worked with simulators. These are all qualities that describe our students. Now is the time to provide our future doctors with increased access to these critical teaching tools by expanding our successful Youngblood Medical Skills Lab into a new Clinical Training Facility.