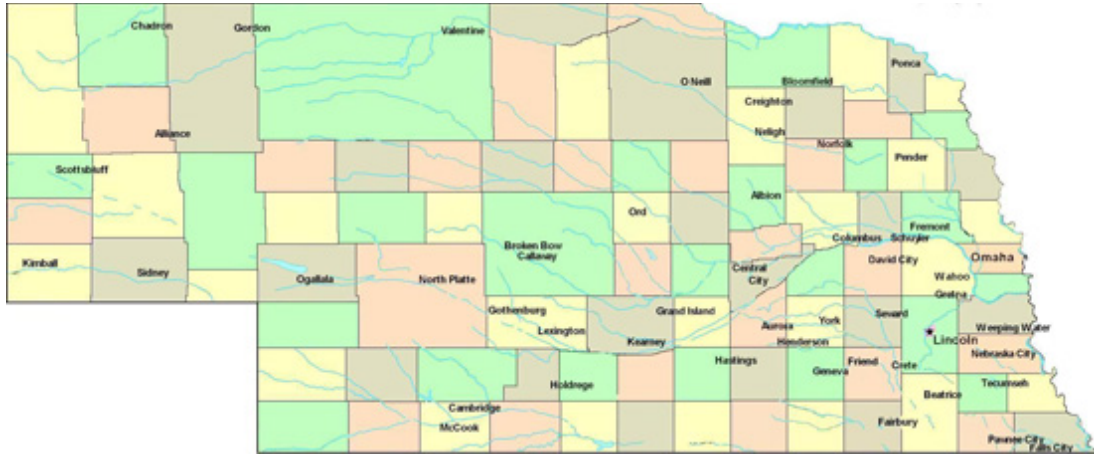


Educating Nebraska's Health Professionals



UNMC's advanced rural training program sends residents to sites across Nebraska to receive advanced training in rural medicine. Seventy percent of Nebraska's physicians are UNMC graduates.

Angie Brennan, M.D., could have gone anywhere to practice medicine. Instead, the Nebraska native chose to return to her smalltown roots and serve the people of St. Paul, Neb.

Dr. Brennan, a 2003 graduate of the University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Medicine, is one of three family physicians at the Howard County Hospital and Medical Clinic in St. Paul and an example of how UNMC is educating Nebraskans to provide health care for their friends and neighbors.

“Our first mission is to recruit and retain the best Nebraska students,” said Jeffrey Hill, M.D., associate dean for admissions and student affairs, UNMC College of Medicine. Dr. Hill noted that more than 85 percent of UNMC’s medical students are from Nebraska. The School of Allied Health Professions (SAHP) nearly mirrors the College of Medicine with 80 percent of its students hailing from within the state. The SAHP educates students in 10 allied health professions, and many of those students remain in Nebraska after graduation, said Kyle Meyer, Ph.D., associate dean of the SAHP.

“For instance, over the past five years, 76 percent of graduates from the clinical laboratory science (formerly medical technology) program have taken their first job in Nebraska, as have approximately 70 percent of physician assistant graduates and 50 percent of physical therapist graduates. In addition, 80 percent of both clinical laboratory scientists and physician assistants practicing in Nebraska are UNMC graduates,” Dr. Meyer said.

“We have a footprint in every town that has a health care provider,” said Paul Paulman, M.D., professor of family medicine at UNMC.

Seventy percent of the health professionals practicing in rural Nebraska are UNMC graduates. All three of the doctors and the physician assistant practicing at the medical clinic where Dr. Brennan works are graduates of UNMC. So is the surgeon who travels to the clinic from Grand Island once a week. The department of family medicine alone sends out more than 200



week. The department of family medicine alone sends out more than 200 medical students each year to do preceptorships in rural sites across the state, Dr. Paulman said. "All of the colleges, from nursing to dentistry to allied health, reach out across the state," he said.

UNMC's rural rotations "sealed the deal" for Dr. Angie Brennan '03, who is now practicing in St. Paul, Neb.

The delivery of safe and quality care is of utmost importance to those who educate the bulk of the state's health care providers. UNMC provides specialized training for health care providers who are planning to practice in rural communities. During her senior year of medical school, Dr. Brennan was enrolled in the advanced rural training program. There she learned to stabilize and manage critically ill patients, and perform advanced obstetrics and orthopaedics and several outpatient procedures, such as colonoscopies and endoscopies. These skills are especially important for rural practitioners, said Jeff Harrison, M.D., director of the rural residency-training program at UNMC. "Being able to manage critically ill patients in the intensive care unit or perform an emergency c-section are invaluable skills for these practitioners," Dr. Harrison said.

"The advanced rural training I received has made a huge impact," Dr. Brennan said. "I am able to offer more full-care service to my patients."

Dr. Harrison said the advanced rural training program helps to keep students like Dr. Brennan interested in practicing in smaller communities. "It's not only important to recruit those kids who have a desire to go back to rural Nebraska," Dr. Harrison said, "but it's also important that we retain their interest." You do that by sending them out to a rural practice for the last weeks of their first year, and then another three weeks at the end of their fourth-year in medical school, he said.

The rural rotations are what made rural medicine Dr. Brennan's passion. "I always knew I wanted to be a rural physician, but those rural preceptorships sealed the deal for me," she said. Dr. Harrison said the preceptorships give the students a sense of what it's like to work in a small community. But what gives a student the confidence to practice in those communities is providing training in the skills they will need to be successful, he said. That's why the new Michael F. Sorrell Center for Health Science Education is such a big deal.

"It's not just another new building on campus," Dr. Paulman said. "It's a place where we are going to be able to ensure that our students have the skills they need before they graduate."

Take the clinical skills lab for example, he said. Students will be taught and tested time and again on the skills they need. "We want to make sure our students have the confidence and competence to go anywhere and practice medicine," he said.

With the opening of the new Sorrell Center, the UNMC College of Medicine will – for the first time in 30 years – increase its class size this fall from 120 to 130 students. The Sorrell Center allows for adequate space to accommodate the larger number of students, Dr. Paulman said.