



Montana University System

WWAMI

Medical Education Program at Montana State University

WWAMI Facts

- WWAMI is MT's medical school and has been for over 35 years.
- More than 600 MT residents have earned medical degrees through WWAMI.
- MT admits the same number of students today into the program as it did in 1973.
- On average, the return rate of MT students graduating from WWAMI is 40%; this number increases to 55% when all WWAMI students are included.
- Over 250 MT Physicians have clinical faculty appointments at UW.
- It takes a minimum of 7 years from entry to practice to become a physician (4 yrs in medical school, 3 years in residency).
- Montana is ranked 43rd in the nation in terms of access to medical education.
- MT's aging population and rural nature combine to produce a large medically underserved population.

Program Summary

In 1973, Montana entered into a cooperative program with the School of Medicine at the University of Washington and the states of Alaska and Idaho. Wyoming joined the program in 1997, resulting in "WWAMI", the acronym for the cooperating states. WWAMI's primary purpose is to make medical education accessible to students in northwestern states that do not have medical schools.

Program Goals:

1. Make public medical education accessible to Montana residents
2. Encourage graduates to choose careers in primary care medicine and locate their practices in underserved or rural areas
3. Support and encourage talented students, especially minority students, to enter the field of medicine

How Does the Program Work?

The program operates through a decentralized education process. In Montana, 20 new medical students enter the program each year and complete their first year of studies on the MSU campus. Students join WWAMI participants from other states in Seattle for the remainder of their classroom studies in the second year.

Clinical training (years 3 and 4) can be completed across the WWAMI region. Both Billings and Missoula offer the full complement of third-year clinical training, and single-specialty clinical rotations for both the third and fourth years are available across Montana. This provision of clinical training in Montana engages our Montana physicians in helping educate the next generation and helps recruit WWAMI students to Montana communities.

State Support

In order to defray the cost of non-resident tuition to the UW Medical School, the state of Montana provides a subsidy for each student enrolled in the program. In FY10 the state provided \$3.5M to support 80 students in WWAMI at an average subsidy of \$42,000 per student. State support covers the non-resident portion of tuition and fees, while students pay on average an additional \$21,000 per year.

WWAMI vs. New Medical School

The cost of establishing a medical school is sizable. The most recent publicly-funded medical school is Florida State. To begin their school with a class size of 30 students the state spent \$155M. At full roll out with 120 students per class they expect to pay \$38M annually to operate the school or \$79,000 per student per year of state support.

Doctor Shortage

Montana TRUST (Targeted Rural Underserved Track) is a WWAMI initiative designed to alleviate the shortage of primary care and other needed specialties in rural and under-served areas of the state. This program seeks to select, educate, and support Montana students with an interest in rural or underserved medicine. Five WWAMI students in Montana were selected for this program in 2009.

For more information on the WWAMI program visit:

www.montana.edu/wwwami