

Grant Targets Need for Rural Doctors

December 11, 2009 11:45 AM Arthur Nead
anead@tulane.edu

The Tulane School of Medicine received a three-year, \$411,400 grant from the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation to launch an innovative effort called the Rural Immersion Program. The program will offer a select group of third-year medical students the opportunity to reside and train in a rural Louisiana community while also applying a public health focus to their education.



In a Pierre Part, La., clinic, Tulane medical student France Fung, right, works under the observation of Dr. Jim Larrison, at rear. A new program will send more medical students to live and train in rural Louisiana. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

The grant will be matched by funds from the medical school for a nearly \$800,000 commitment.

"Louisiana's severe shortage of primary care physicians, particularly in rural areas, has persisted or worsened despite the graduation of 400 new physicians and the training of 1,500 medical residents in the state each year," says Dr. Richard Streiffer, professor and chair of [family and community medicine](#). "Our new program

will direct a pool of medical students each year toward rural practice. The traditional medical education approach and setting, which is based in urban and tertiary facilities, simply has not done that."

The program will immerse the students in rural communities for almost a year of medical education during which they will learn from both rural life and rural medicine. The students will fulfill the majority of their clinical rotation requirements and deliver patient care under the oversight and mentorship of experienced primary care physicians.

"The students' time will be characterized by hands-on experience as they care for patients of all ages, with an emphasis on continuity of care and relationship-based care," Streiffer says.

Dr. Benjamin P. Sachs, senior vice president and dean, Tulane School of Medicine, says, "In keeping with Tulane's commitment to address community health needs, I am very excited about the opportunities the Macy Foundation award creates for the future of Tulane University School of Medicine and rural Louisiana as we educate and train the next generation of clinicians and physician leaders."