

Tulane University's Medical Residency Program Gets Bigger

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Tulane University School of Medicine will expand its residency program by approximately 28 new positions this spring thanks to funding changes included in federal healthcare reform legislation.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, which funds most U.S. residency positions, redistributed 1,354 Medicare residency slots earlier this month, reducing those from hospitals that were not training up to their residency caps. The newly allocated positions were given to qualifying hospitals in rural or underserved areas with the highest medical need. Almost 90 percent of Louisiana falls under the federal designation of Health Professional Shortage Area for primary care physicians, according to the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals.

Baton Rouge General Medical Center will get 18 of Tulane's new residency positions, while 10 will be assigned to Tulane Medical Center.

"The majority will be in internal medicine with some in general surgery," said Dr. Jeffrey Wiese, associate dean of graduate medical education.

"Increasing the number of residency positions in Louisiana is an important step in growing the base of primary care physicians in the state," Wiese said.

As health care reform is implemented, industry experts predict an influx of new patients into the healthcare system as more people are covered by health insurance.

"This is a very constructive move to increase the physician pipeline in Louisiana," Wiese said. "About 80 percent of residents from Louisiana stay in the state to practice medicine after they complete their residencies. Two-thirds of those who are not from Louisiana, but who were recruited to Tulane for their residencies, will

ultimately practice in Louisiana when they finish."

Tulane University School of Medicine has a total of approximately 448 residency positions and plans to grow to 480 during the next three years.