

In a proactive move to try to meet the demand for family physicians in rural Nebraska, the University of Nebraska Medical Center and the University of Nebraska at Kearney have established the Kearney Health Opportunities Program (KHOP).

“With 32 percent of rural physicians over the age of 55, workforce projections indicate a critical shortage of physicians in rural Nebraska over the next five to 10 years,” said Harold M. Maurer, M.D., UNMC chancellor. “The goal of the KHOP program is to address this need by providing rural Nebraska students the opportunity to pursue a career in medicine, and then hopefully they will want to go back and practice in a rural community.”

The KHOP program will target high school seniors interested in family medicine. It is modeled after the Rural Health Opportunities Program (RHOP), which was started by UNMC in 1990 to encourage rural residents to pursue careers in health care and practice in small communities throughout Nebraska.

“KHOP is a tremendous opportunity for students who are interested in the field of health care, and it also will be an excellent service to the citizens of Nebraska,” said UNK Chancellor Doug Kristensen. “This program will further extend the partnership we enjoy with UNMC.”

The program works like this:

- Five students a year will be accepted into the program starting with the 2010-2011 class this fall. Applications are being accepted now.
- For the 2011-2012 class the deadline to apply is Dec. 1, 2010.
- The students will be accepted into KHOP in their senior year of high school.

- After completing their undergraduate studies at UNK, they will automatically be accepted into medical school at UNMC, provided they maintain an acceptable grade point average.
- The students will receive a tuition waiver for their time at UNK but will have to pay tuition and compete for scholarships when they get to UNMC.
- Acceptance into the program is based on academic standing, ACT scores, community involvement and a desire to return to rural Nebraska.

“UNK is the perfect fit for this program, as it does an excellent job of preparing students for the rigors of medical school,” said John Gollan, M.D., Ph.D., dean, UNMC College of Medicine.

“On average, more than 60 percent of RHOP graduates go on to practice in rural communities. UNMC has demonstrated considerable success in building pipeline programs that target shortage areas,” said Jeff Hill, M.D., associate dean for admissions and students, UNMC College of Medicine. “We’re confident that the KHOP program will continue this tradition.”

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