MU medical school expands program to address rural health disparities

Tuesday, January 7, 2014 | 6:00 a.m. CST
BY FRED BROSCHART

COLUMBIA — **MU's School of Medicine wants to train more doctors to provide health care in rural Missouri.**

The university has expanded its Bryant Scholars Pre-Admissions Program to seven additional colleges in the state. The program encourages future physicians to practice in underserved rural areas by allowing undergraduates interested in rural medicine to earn pre-admission to the medical school.

The schools added are:

- Missouri Western State University, St. Joseph
- William Jewell College, Liberty
- Missouri Southern State University, Joplin
- Westminster College, Fulton
- Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville
- University of Missouri — St. Louis
- University of Missouri — Kansas City

The addition of these schools brings the total number of eligible undergraduate colleges to 13.

Statewide, most rural counties — which are home to 37 percent of the state’s population — have health care worker shortages. Of 101 rural counties in the state, 98 are "health professional shortage areas," according to a [2013 report by the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services](https://health.missouri.gov/).
A health professional shortage area is defined by the U.S. government as an area where there are more than 3,500 patients per physician, according to the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration website.

Many rural areas in the state also lack hospitals. Of 166 licensed hospitals in the state, only 76 are in rural counties, and 41 of those have fewer than 25 beds and offer limited services, according to the report.

Lower survival rates in car crashes has been cited as one of the problems with the lack of emergency health care infrastructure in rural areas. The rate of deaths attributed to crashes in these areas is more than double that of urban areas, according to the report.

Statewide, death rates from all causes are almost 10 percent higher in rural than urban areas, according to the report. Rural areas have greater death rates in all of the top 10 categories of cause of death statewide, according to the report.

"You'll find rural Missourians to be older and sicker," said Brian Smith of the Rural Missouri Crisis Center in Columbia, an organization that advocates for issues of importance to farmers and rural residents.

Many rural Missouri residents unable to visit a doctor for minor health issues due to a lack of insurance or difficulty in traveling to a doctor eventually wind up in emergency rooms with more severe problems, Smith said.

"The biggest factor is a matter of access," Smith said.

“Thirty-seven percent of the population lives in rural areas,” Kathleen Quinn of MU’s medical school said, “but only 18 percent of primary care physicians practice in a rural area.”

The Bryant Scholars program is intended to improve rural health care access by attracting rural students to the medical field by offering students from rural areas an opportunity to earn pre-admission to a highly selective medical school while they are still undergraduates, Quinn said.

“We want students from rural areas,” Quinn said. “Years of research shows that if a student is from a rural area, they will most likely go back there to practice.”
Eighty percent of Bryant Scholars stay in Missouri, and 55 percent of graduates work in rural areas, Quinn said.

While the program does not offer scholarships or grants, Quinn said there are federal programs such as the National Health Service Corps, which pays for a medical school graduate's student loans if the graduate works as a primary care physician in a health professional shortage area.
Central Missouri schools cancel classes amid snow, extreme cold

By Catherine Martin

Monday, January 6, 2014 at 2:00 pm

Columbia Public Schools canceled classes today and Stephens College closed campus, but the University of Missouri and Columbia College campuses remained open.

School district spokeswoman Michelle Baumstark said administrators decided this morning to also cancel school tomorrow. Classes were canceled today because of a combination of extreme cold and snow.

"We have to give our crews time to clear all the lots and all the sidewalks. I think people sometimes forget how much property the school district has that has to be cleared," Baumstark said.

Getting buses started in extreme cold can also be challenging, and safety is a chief concern, Baumstark said. Extreme low wind chills threatened children's safety.

"We want to make sure our kids are safe," she said. "We couldn't guarantee that this morning with negative temperatures."

Temperatures were below zero this morning, and wind chills bottomed out at about 30 degrees below zero. Like Columbia, public and private schools across the region shut their doors.

Safety is also a priority at MU, but spokesman Christian Basi said crews worked for the past 48 hours to make sure the campus was "clear and passable." A couple of factors made it important to keep facilities open, Basi said, such as research projects that need to be monitored on a daily basis and a health care system many individuals rely on.

"Safety is our No. 1 priority on campus, but we do also realize a lot of people rely on us for other operations that happen here," he said.

Most classes have not started for the spring semester, but courses are in session for the schools of medicine, veterinary medicine and law, Basi said. Professors in those schools have been "encouraged to work with students" who have challenges in getting to class today, he said.
Classes also are not in session at Columbia College, but the campus was open to employees who could make it in.

"Always, our consideration is for employees to do what they can to remain safe," spokeswoman Brandi Herrman said. "Whatever that means — if that means staying home, then they can do that."

Stephens College's staff took measures to keep the roughly 55 horses on campus safe and warm during the extreme weather.

Starting Friday, stable employees started putting down extra hay and straw in the stalls, Stephens spokeswoman Janese Silvey said. All the school's extra blankets are being used on and around the horses.

"So each horse is housed in a stall with lots of bedding and padding," Silvey said.

Heaters are running in the stables during the day, and employees are checking in on nights and weekends, she said. They make sure the horses have plenty to eat and break up any frozen water.

"Bottom line, we're very proactive when it comes to making sure our horses are safe and cared for, especially during extreme weather," Silvey said.
Boone Hospital opens Stewart Cancer Center despite snow, cold

Building bears coach's name.

By Ashley Jost

Monday, January 6, 2014 at 2:00 pm Comments (1)

The Stewart Cancer Center opened its doors Monday morning, allowing staff to start transferring patients into their new rooms in the inpatient portion of the center.

Although the opening ceremony scheduled for yesterday was canceled because of the weather, Boone Hospital Center did not delay the cancer center's opening this morning on the sixth floor of the South Tower.

Ben Cornelius, marketing manager for the hospital, said 23 inpatient residents were transferred this morning. Patients were brought to their rooms every 15 minutes from about 8:30 a.m. until noon. The center has 32 inpatient beds.

The center is named after former University of Missouri basketball Coach Norm Stewart and his wife, Virginia, both of whom have had cancer. According to a previous Tribune report, the project cost $7.2 million.

Stewart said he has toured the facility and was amazed by how the technology and rooms are all "above the rim."

"It's a place we don't want to have to be, but I've been there, and other people will be there, too," he said. "Someday, we hopefully won't need a cancer center anymore, but right now we do."

Stewart said he is honored to be associated with the center and pleased with the community's acceptance of the project.

Fred Parry, chairman of the Boone Hospital Board of Trustees, said the project has been ahead of schedule, with the inpatient units being ready for almost two months.

"Just a year and a half ago, we transitioned from the old wing of the hospital to the new wing, and that involved five floors of moving, so one floor seemed like a piece of cake," he said.
So far, the transition has been smooth.

Parry said there will be a rescheduled grand opening event, but the day hasn't been set yet.
Stewart Cancer Center opens Monday at Boone Hospital Center

Monday, January 6, 2014 | 6:00 a.m. CST; updated 11:51 p.m. CST, Monday, January 6, 2014
BY BREANNE BRAMMER

COLUMBIA— The Stewart Cancer Center will open Monday at Boone Hospital Center. It is founded by former MU men's basketball coach Norm Stewart and his wife, Virginia.

Both Stewarts have faced cancer surgeries. The couple said they hope patients can identify with the challenges they faced during their illnesses, according to the Boone Hospital Center website.

The inpatient unit is located on the sixth floor of the south tower and includes 32 private patient rooms. The center offers services including screening, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitative and hospice care. Construction was estimated to cost $7.2 million. Norm Stewart is also the founder of Coaches vs. Cancer, which has raised more than $87 million to combat cancer.

The grand opening ceremony scheduled for Sunday was canceled due to inclement weather.
COLUMBIA — A Walmart Express will open at 308 S. Ninth St. on Wednesday and will bring a full pharmacy, some fresh produce, school supplies, beer and wine to the northeast edge of MU's campus.

"It's just like a mini Walmart," said Farai Madzura, store manager of the Walmart Express. The compact store will feature items geared toward students, such as single-serving food items, some fruit — like apples, bananas and oranges, a frozen food section and a dairy section with milk and eggs.

The store's opening means students who live in apartment complexes close to the edge of campus along Ninth Street will have somewhere to go for essentials.

"My roommate doesn't have a car, so I usually take her to the store when I go," Devon Vincent, a resident of The Lofts at 308 Ninth St., said. "We have very different schedules, so if I can't take her to the store, now she doesn't have to depend on me."

The 3,700-square-foot store will have about 12 employees, several self-checkouts and one manned checkout, Madzura said.

Carrie Gartner, executive director of The District, said that with more people living downtown, the need for stores that offer groceries has increased.

"What's great is that instead of forcing us to form to their model, they're changing to fit with us," Gartner said. The new store will occupy an existing retail space and will not require a big parking lot like its larger stores, she noted.

The new store is modeled after are three other Walmart mini stores — called Walmart on Campus — located on campuses in the U.S.: at Arizona State University, the University of Arkansas, and the Georgia Institute of Technology. Because the Columbia
store is not technically on campus, it will sell beer and wine, unlike Walmart's other campus stores.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony for the store will be held at 7:30 a.m. on Wednesday. The Columbia Chamber of Commerce will hold its own ribbon-cutting ceremony at 4 p.m. Wednesday.

The store's hours are 8 a.m.-10 p.m. Monday-Saturday and 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Sunday.