

TRAINING PHYSICIANS TO SERVE ALL OF UTAH



Utah needs more physicians, especially primary care physicians and especially in its rural communities. 22% of Utahns live in rural areas but only 11% of its primary care physicians work there.

Utah has seen explosive growth in medical school graduates, but growth in residency programs has not kept pace. We know physicians who train in Utah are more likely to stay in Utah, especially if they complete both medical school and residency here. Another factor shaping physician workforce is where training occurs. Most training currently occurs along the Wasatch Front in large specialty centers with very limited to no exposure to rural health care delivery systems.

The Spencer Fox Eccles School of Medicine (SFESOM), along with health care and higher education partners seek to address Utah's rural physician workforce challenges with a newly created regional campus of the SFESOM — the Southern Utah Regional Medical Campus (SURMC).

Graduates of the SURMC will be:

- More likely to practice in fields like family practice, internal medicine, pediatrics, psychiatry, obstetrics / gynecology, geriatrics, or general surgery.
- More likely to practice in a rural or underserved area in Utah.

Ongoing physician shortages have created a severe deficit in clinical preceptors to train future physicians in Utah. The SURMC seeks to overcome this challenge by combining an accelerated 3-year M.D. program with direct entry into new residency programs at the SURMC. Anticipated high rates of retention in southern Utah post-residency will naturally grow the preceptor pool and become self-sustaining. Similar programs in other states have seen at least 75% physician retention in rural and primary care careers.

Current State Ongoing Funding \$5.5 million

- 10 new medical students per year starting in FY 26
- Partner with existing primary care residency programs at the SFESOM to create rural residency pathways
- Establish accelerated 3-year M.D. program option with direct entry into rural residency pathway programs for up to 10 SURMC M.D. program students

Future Funding Needs

- Necessary new program capital for facilities and technology (one-time)
- Expand graduate medical education (GME) to include more rural residency options in Utah (ongoing)
- Expand SURMC M.D. program class size up to 25 students (ongoing)

Utah's Physician Workforce Crisis

