

Wichita State's \$515K grant to aid health care training in urban settings

BY JOSH HECK

For years Wichita State University's College of Health Professions has focused on attracting workers to rural areas.

But a recent grant renewal could help shift the focus toward cities.

Richard Muma, a public health sciences professor at WSU's College of Health Professions, has received a three-year, \$515,000 grant from the Department of Health and Human Services to focus on attracting physicians to urban settings — where health care providers say some people are underserved. The initial \$678,000 grant was awarded in 2005.

Muma says the long-term goal for the project is to ensure schools like WSU's College of Health Professions is preparing an educated workforce that is willing to serve underserved areas. He says urban areas differ from smaller communities in terms of demography, environment, economy, social structure and availability of resources.

Beverly White, CEO of the Center for Health and Wellness, agrees there's a need for quality care in inner city urban areas, especially for those who are uninsured or underinsured.

She says the training could lead to a bolstered workforce down the line.

White says having medical students working at the center is a "win all the way around" because the facility gets extra providers that it might otherwise not be able to afford to hire.

Wichita State University health grant
How much: \$515,000 over three years.

Awarded by: The Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration.

Recipient: Richard Muma. In addition to training, White says the

Center for Health and Wellness, which has been involved with Muma's project since 2005, also focuses on health education and disease prevention.

As part of the grant program, 24 medical students in each of the next three years will see between 1,000 and 1,500 patients a month, Muma says.

The Hunter Health Clinic and Healthy Options for Planeview also will be involved with training WSU med students.

Muma says the grant is important because of the challenges Wichita and Sedgwick County face in providing adequate health care to all individuals.

"Community assessments have identified socioeconomic barriers and several geographic areas of Wichita with perceived barriers to adequate health care," he says.

Ron Whitting, executive director of the Wichita Business Coalition on Health Care, says grants like Muma's are important to addressing health care issues, such as having primary care providers in urban settings.

"Fundamentally it's an important step to provide additional health care," he says.

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Richard Muma was awarded a \$515,000 grant to help train students to be health care providers in an urban setting. He says the long-term goal of the project is to prepare an educated workforce that is willing to serve underserved areas.

JOSH HECK/WSU



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Hunter Health Clinic estimates that 75 percent of patients obtaining services there are at or below federal poverty level.

Each year, Hunter serves close to 20,000 patients with more than 60,000 clinic visits, up 69 percent from 2000. More than 75 percent of those patients have no public or private health insurance.