**JAC Reports**

**UW Family Medical Residency Programs and**

**Physician and Dental Shortages in Wyoming**

***Due September 1, 2012***

During its July 31st meeting, the Joint Appropriations Committee asked the University of Wyoming to provide the following information:

* Who is conducting the study on the Casper and Cheyenne Family Medical Residency Programs (FMRP)?
* Provide an assessment of the areas of shortages in the state for dentists and physicians, including areas of specialty where applicable.

This information is offered below.

***Who is conducting the study on the Casper and Cheyenne Family Medical Residency Programs?***

In his budget recommendations to the legislature for the 2013-2014 biennium, Governor Mead stated: “I recognize the importance of the services both (Casper and Cheyenne) clinics provide in these communities and I have asked the University to explore other delivery options with the Department of Health that may be more efficient. I recommend that the University be required to evaluate both programs and submit a plan that addresses the services provided to both students and community members and to provide options for a more efficient delivery system.” While the legislature did not incorporate this directive into legislation, the Governor’s Office and members of the JAC understood nevertheless that this report would be compiled.

UW began discussing the content of the report in March, soon after the conclusion of the legislative session. Joe Steiner, the Dean of the College of Health Sciences, is directing the study and is being assisted by other faculty within his department, including the directors of the two FMRPs. Dean Steiner has also spoken about the study with Tom Forsland, Director of the Wyoming Department of Health, and worked with Wendy Braund, State Health Officer, on defining the program options examined in the report.

An initial draft of the report was completed in mid-August. Dave Driggers, former UW director of medical education who recently retired, the directors of the FMRPs, the Provost’s Office and President’s Office will be among the internal reviewers. UW will ask Ms. Braund, Wyoming Medical Center (Casper), Cheyenne Regional Medical Center, and Wyoming Medical Society to offer comments as well. UW will submit the final report to the Governor’s Office in early October. It will then be conveyed to the JAC after the Governor’s review.

***Provide an assessment of the areas of shortages in the state for dentists and physicians, including areas of specialty where applicable.***

**Summary**

Most areas of the state outside of Cheyenne and Casper are now experiencing, and will probably continue to have, shortages of physicians and dentists through 2020. Wyoming’s two largest communities will likely have sufficient numbers of family practitioners and surgeons with shortages of some physicians, such as pediatricians. The entire state is presently short of dentists, with the possible exception of Casper and some areas in the southeastern part of the state. It is projected that this shortage will grow more acute every year through 2020. UW’s programs in WWAMI, FMRPs, WICHE and WYDENT are some of the efforts in the state to train and retain physicians and dentists to help address these shortages.

**Details**

The United States Department of Health and Human Services designates areas of the country that are medically underserved. In making these determinations, the federal agency considers an array of health care professionals, although the presence of physicians and dentists are two of the most important factors. Currently for Wyoming, the department has designated parts or all of the following counties as medical shortage areas: Albany, Big Horn, Crook, Fremont, Goshen, Hot Springs, Laramie, Natrona, Niobrara, and Sweetwater.

For physicians and surgeons in general, there is a shortage in every section of the state except Casper and Cheyenne. The severest needs exist in the southeastern and southwestern quadrants, with the slightest occurring in the northeastern section.

More specifically, for primary health care physicians, Wyoming currently has a shortage in Sweetwater, Carbon, Converse, Big Horn, Goshen, Campbell and Niobrara counties, and slightly underserved in Natrona, Washakie and Crook counties.

DWS makes projections about workforce shortages for the ten-year period from 2010-2020. Here are the ones from the agency’s Research and Planning Division for various medical specialties:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Physician Occupation** | **Annual Openings** | **Annual Hires** | **Balance** |
| Family & General Practitioners | 56 | 58 | 2 |
| Obstetricians & Gynecologists | 7 | 15 | 8 |
| Pediatricians, General | 10 | 0 | -10 |
| Surgeons | 15 | 54 | 41 |
| All Other Physicians & Surgeons | 34 | 20 | -14 |

A positive balance reflects there is a projected surplus statewide, but it does not indicate that all of the areas will experience this. DWS does not offer projections about where shortages of some physicians and surgeons may occur in the various regions of the state over the next eight years, nor does it take into account the possible increased demand for primary care physicians as a result of the implementation of the federal health care legislation.

The column labeled Annual Hires includes projections of graduates of UW’s WWAMI Program and FMRPs. Twenty students per year are selected for the WWAMI program. 203 students have entered the program since 1997, and many of them are still at UW, the University of Washington or in residency programs throughout the nation. 63 students have completed their residencies, and 41 of them have returned to Wyoming to practice, a retention rate of 65%. They are practicing in these communities:

Buffalo -1

Casper – 8

Cheyenne – 7

Cody – 2

Douglas -1

Evanston – 1

Gillette – 3

Jackson -1

Lander – 4

Laramie – 5

Powell – 3

Riverton – 1

Rock Springs -1

Sheridan -3

Of these 41 physicians, 23 (or 56%) are primary care physicians (defined as family medicine, internal medicine and pediatrics).

The FMRPs enroll 14 residents per year. Over the years, approximately 35-40% of them have stayed in Wyoming to practice primary care medicine. That is approximately 5 physicians per year.

For dentists, the DWS data indicates there is currently a need for 70 more dentists statewide. There are shortages in Cheyenne as well as the northeastern and western half of the state. The department’s statistics for 2010-2020 project an additional shortfall of 14 dentists per year.

Currently, UW’s WYDENT Program enrolls eight students per year in the dental programs at Creighton University and the University of Nebraska. Most of the UW students have excelled in these schools and have thus competed well in applying to programs to continue their education as residents or to specialize in areas of dentistry, such as orthodontics and pediatrics.

Most of the remaining 2011 graduates have established practices or joined existing ones in Casper/Glenrock, Cheyenne, Evanston and Alpine/Afton. One is living in South Dakota for a year while her husband completes medical school. 2012 graduates are starting practices in Casper (2), Douglas and Green River/Rock Springs. Since they graduated just a couple of months ago, a handful of others are still exploring where to establish an office, perhaps in Casper, Laramie, and Cheyenne. Two are not sure yet about practicing in the state.

The WICHE program also supports Wyoming students who wish to become health care professionals. Until recently, WICHE students were not required to practice in Wyoming after graduation to receive financial support, thus making it difficult to determine how many returned to the state. The legislature recently adopted a payback requirement for the program, but the first group of students that entered it under this condition will not graduate until 2017. WICHE annually reserves four slots for students wanting to become physicians and dentists. (This is not four slots each but a total of four for the two disciplines combined.) UW estimates that three will return to the state to practice each year.

In compiling the information offered above, the following sources were consulted:

* “Health Care Needs in Wyoming: Advancing the Study” Occasional Paper No. 6, Fall 2011, issued by the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services (DWS), Research and Planning Division
* “June 2011 Primary Care Physician Need” compiled by the Wyoming Office of Rural Health
* Medical Shortage Areas as defined by the US Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration
* WWAMI and WYDENT program information