

EDITORIAL: 40 years of life-saving for UCSF Fresno

Longtime Valley residents might remember that in the 1970s there was a huge community effort to have Fresno named as the site of a proposed new UC medical school.

The effort fell short, but state lawmakers approved the establishment here of a teaching facility for third- and fourth-year medical students from UC San Francisco in 1975.

Thank goodness they did.

Over the last 40 years, UCSF Fresno has been a life-saver for Valley residents, particularly those living in rural communities.

But regardless of where you live, odds are that you have seen a UCSF Fresno trained doctor. University officials say that the school has trained about 3,000 physicians and 30% to 40% of them have made the Valley home.

Can you imagine how much worse the Valley's well-documented doctor shortage would be if not for UCSF Fresno?

The good news is, UCSF Fresno's positive impact figures to become even bigger.

It is now training 600 doctors and future doctors annually. About 250 of them are medical residents in specialties such as emergency, family, community and internal medicine; pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, orthopaedic surgery, psychiatry and surgery. It also has nine specialty dental residents and 50 fellows in 17 sub-specialties.

To get your arms around UCSF Fresno's growth, consider this: It began with one core faculty member in 1975; today it has 230 core faculty members — and 640 total faculty.

These teacher/physicians both train future doctors and provide direct care to Valley residents at UCSF Fresno's partner hospitals, clinics and private practices.

Clinical research is a big part of UCSF Fresno's mission, too. Since 1998, it has attracted more than \$85 million in research, public service and training grants and contracts. There are about 260 clinical research studies underway there.

Particularly impressive is the teaching program's commitment to inspiring Valley students to consider medical careers. It provides academic preparation for middle- and high school students through the Junior Doctors Academy and Doctors Academy. And it prepares Fresno State undergraduates for careers in medicine through the Health Careers Opportunity Program.

Then there is the Longitudinal Integrated Fresno Experience program. We know that's a mouthful, so just call it LIFE.

This is a six-month curriculum for UCSF students in their third year of clinical clerkships. It was developed by Dr. Kenny Banh, director of UCSF Fresno's undergraduate medical education. The program covers internal medicine, family and community medicine, psychiatry and neurology.

UCSF Fresno also collaborates with UC Merced and UC Davis in the San Joaquin Valley Program in Medical Education. This, too, is a mouthful, so just call it PRIME. The program trains aspiring doctors to serve the Valley's rural and poor communities.

UCSF Fresno will celebrate its 40th birthday at its biennial fundraiser, "Valley Visions," Saturday night at the Fresno Convention Center New Exhibit Hall. Proceeds will benefit all of its medical education programs.

We know that UCSF Fresno's contributions to Valley health care sometimes go unnoticed. Let's give it what it has earned: our thanks and a standing ovation.

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