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Sending more D.O.s into the world

Founding college of osteopathic medicine to honor grads at 118th commencement

KIRKSVILLE, Mo. – As the nation’s physician shortage weighs on the minds of millions of Americans seeking quality healthcare, A.T. Still University’s Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine (ATSU-KCOM) will lend a hand by sending 172 osteopathic physicians into the world.

Commencement ceremony

On Saturday, May 15, KCOM will hold its 118th annual commencement ceremony at Baldwin Hall Auditorium on the Truman State University campus. The college will celebrate its newest physicians, who number among more than 15,000 who have graduated since 1892.

This year, 165 students are candidates for the doctor of osteopathic medicine degree, nine are candidates for the master of biomedical sciences degree, and two are candidates to receive dual degrees.

American Osteopathic Association (AOA) President and 1967 KCOM graduate Larry A. Wickless will deliver the commencement address. He also will receive an honorary doctor of humane letters degree, conferred by ATSU President Jack Magruder.

“I was privileged to attend Dr. Wickless’ installation as president of the AOA,” said Dr. Magruder. “He has done a marvelous work – cut costs and improved quality and worked with Congress and the President to improve the healthcare bill. He has been an extremely effective AOA president.”

Many military graduates

This year, 21 of KCOM’s graduates will enter military service. Eleven will enter the Air Force, six will enter the Army, and four will enter the Navy.

Major General Douglas J. Robb will commission the military graduates immediately following the ceremony. Maj. Gen. Robb is the Command Surgeon, Headquarters Air Mobility Command (AMC), Scott Air Force Base, Ill. General Robb oversees the healthcare services provided by 6,500 AMC medical personnel located at 11 community-based military treatment facilities.

“It is an honor for Kirksville to receive a flag officer for the commissioning ceremony,” said second-year medical student and class president John Thurman Jr.

ATSU’s impact

According to the Council on Graduate Medical Education, the United States will face a critical physician workforce shortage of approximately 85,000 physicians by 2020. There are currently more than 55,000 practicing D.O.s. who are licensed to practice the full scope of medicine in all 50 states across the nation.

The majority of osteopathic physicians are primary care practitioners; thus, D.O.s and the colleges that train them, like KCOM, play a special role in affecting the nation’s looming physician shortage.

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Founded in 1892 as the nation's first college of osteopathic medicine, A.T. Still University provides graduate level education in whole person healthcare. Recognized internationally for its integrated approach, ATSU equips students with the knowledge, compassion, and hands-on experience needed to address the body, mind, and spirit. The University now comprises the Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine, the School of Health Management, the Arizona School of Dentistry & Oral Health, the Arizona School of Health Sciences, and the School of Osteopathic Medicine in Arizona.