

Med school prep program provides new opportunity

BY TRACEY DRURY
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When Adaffaras Adal first applied to medical school, he knew he wasn't quite prepared. "I really didn't have an extensive background in biomedical sciences," he says.

But Adal, now a fourth-year medical resident at the University at Buffalo School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, was determined – and he showed potential. And that's why admissions personnel at the medical school recommended him for a post-baccalaureate program that serves as a prep program for aspiring doctors.

The program, funded by the State Department of Health and run by the 16 members of the Associated Medical Schools of New York (AMSNY), this year welcomed its 20th cohort of students. The program was set up

to increase diversity in medical school, providing 12 months of preparation for students who have been educationally or economically disadvantaged students who have been traditionally underrepresented in medicine.

The program provides free tuition, a stipend to cover living and personal expenses and conditional acceptance into the medical school that recommended the student into the program. Students also must agree not to work a separate job during the year in order to fully dedicate themselves to the program.

Jo Wiederhorn, president and CEO at AMSNY's Albany office, says the extra year of study in targeted courses makes a huge difference.

"It's been a very good model and it's produced a lot of fine physicians who practice in underserved areas," Wiederhorn says. "Most go into primary care, so it's really

meeting the goals that we want."

The program is offered at four locations: UB; Upstate Medical Center in Syracuse, University at Stony Brook and New York Medical College in Westchester. Two of the schools, including UB, host the 12-month program; while the other two give students the opportunity to earn a Ph.D. or a master's degree.

Individual plans

Each student is tested and receives an individualized educational plan that targets the specific courses they need. They also receive counseling and mentoring. About 92 percent of those who enter the program go on to successfully complete medical school.

Most of the students coming to the program are academically strong to begin with, says Dr. David Milling, assistant dean for multicultural affairs in UB's medical school,

is director of the program.

Not all of the students recommended for the program recognize they might need it, he says. "There are those who in their own minds think they are ready for medical school and do not need a post-bacc program, and other students who recognize right away that they do," he says.

Adal is a good example: A Buffalo native, he studied anthropology during his undergraduate time at UB. With one year to go, Adal has specialized in urology and hopes to land a position with a hospital somewhere in the Northeast.

"I was excited that I had the opportunity to prove to both myself and to the school that I have the potential to make it through medical school," he says. "It definitely, absolutely prepared me for what was to come afterward."

Trio of dialysis centers in Erie County among projects up for state approval

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Plans for three new dialysis centers in Erie County are among the projects to be considered for approval by the State Department of Health at its Sept. 30 meeting.

All of the projects reviewed by the State Hospital Review & Planning Council deal with establishment of health care facilities. These have all been recommended for approval by staff, some with contingencies:

- Three dialysis centers received contingent approval – all of them owned jointly

by U.S. Renal Care Inc. and Lake Erie Dialysis Providers LLC. The Cheektowaga site, a \$1 million project, will include 13 stations on Harlem Road; the Williamsville site, a \$978,256 project, will include 13 stations on Transit at Sheridan; and the Tonawanda project, a \$614,341 project, will include 13 stations on Eggert Road.

- The Southern Tier Community Health Center Network Inc. in Cattaraugus was recommended for approval to receive permanent life certification for the organization and its two extension clinics.

- Two projects for Elderwood Health Care

facilities received contingent approval: The state board approved the transfer of beds from its Heathwood Health Care site in Williamsville to its Linwood and Maplewood facilities, increasing total beds to 92 at Linwood in Lancaster and 172 beds at Maplewood in Cheektowaga.

- Wyoming County Community Hospital received contingent approval to move ahead on a \$22 million renovation project that includes a 38,000-square-foot addition and renovation of 24,000 square feet of space.

- St. Vincent Health System of Erie, Pa., received contingent approval for a five-year

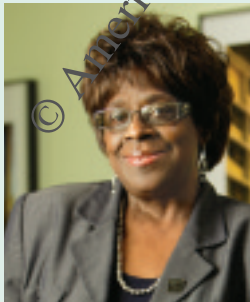
period to become the active parent and co-operator of Westfield Memorial Hospital. The hospital, which previously gave up the license for all 32 beds at the site, will regain four medical/surgical beds and remain a separate corporate identity, but become a subsidiary of the larger organization.

- WNYIC LLC, doing business as WNY Immediate Care, received contingent approval for a five-year period to open a diagnostic and treatment center on Transit Road. The project is a joint effort between Sisters of Charity Hospital and the existing members of WNY Immediate Care.

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