

NEWSRELEASE

For Immediate Release

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VCOM Signs Agreement with Medical School in San Salvador – Extends Partnership in Global Health

The Edward Via Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM) in Blacksburg continues to develop creative educational programs to prepare its medical students to practice and perform medical research in the global health arena.

On February 13, 2007, VCOM signed an agreement with Evangelical University Medical School in San Salvador to partner in its global education program.

Since its inception in 2003, VCOM students have participated in medical mission trips and international rotations in the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, India, and Kenya. The Blacksburg osteopathic medical school is also promoting global medical research in these and other countries.

The establishment of a permanent medical clinic in Veron, Dominican Republic between VCOM and the Dominican Ministry of Education last year was the first formal relationship to provide medical students with unique and high-level medical experiences, while bringing health care to an area where most of its citizens were without health care.

The signing of the agreement between VCOM and Evangelical University Medical School formalized a three long relationship between the schools which has been expanded to provide international medical exposure to students at both schools. VCOM students will do month-long clinical rotations in San Salvador and students who remain in Blacksburg will gain knowledge about tropical medicine and diseases related to poverty over telecommunication lines.

Evangelical University medical students will gain exposure to medical topics from the United States, including a course in osteopathic manual medicine taught by VCOM faculty. Those San Salvador medical students who are bilingual will also learn about VCOM's medical mission program.

The addition of this partnership will enhance the growing members in Global Health Conferences which will promote medical education among medical students and faculty in Honduras, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, and the United States.

The mission of the Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine is to prepare primary care physicians to serve in the rural and underserved areas of Southwest Virginia, North Carolina, and the Appalachian area and to provide medical research for the health of all humans. According to Dean Tooke-Rawlins, "There is a strong parallel between preparing doctors for the full range of medical care in rural and underserved areas in the U.S. with the rural and underserved areas of San Salvador and in the Dominican Republic. Limited, immediate access to specialists requires local doctors to respond to a wide range of needs. Our students who will be educated under this initiative will gain experiences and important skills to make them better physicians here in Virginia and other underserved areas of Appalachia."

VCOM is located in the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center and is a collaborative partner of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech). Dean Tooke-Rawlins explains, "We recruit students who are knowledgeable, compassionate, enthusiastic, altruistic and dutiful. Interestingly, these characteristics result in a student body where over 30% of our students expressing a strong interest in volunteering their services in underserved areas both locally and internationally."

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