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Prince William News

GMU turns soldiers into doctors

A group of new George Mason University students attending the Prince William campus made history this month by being the first in a new innovative partnership which will literally change and save lives. Enlisted military service members in the Air Force and Army can now prepare for careers as uniformed physicians because of a new program headquartered at the F. Edward Hébert School of Medicine, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences and taught by educators at George Mason University's Prince William Campus in Manassas.

GMU turns soldiers into doctors

By Michelle Baker - Contributing Writer
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Courtesy Photos/Evan Cantwell, GMU
Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences leaders visit the first class of enlisted medical degree preparatory program students on the Prince William

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November 14, 2014

Enlisted medical degree preparatory program students on the Prince William Campus of George Mason University.

A group of new George Mason University students attending the Prince William campus made history this month by being the first in a new innovative partnership which will literally change and save lives.

Enlisted military service members in the Air Force and Army can now prepare for careers as uniformed physicians because of a new program headquartered at the F. Edward Hébert School of Medicine, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences and taught by educators at George Mason University's Prince William Campus in Manassas.

The "Enlisted to Medical Degree Preparatory Program," or EMDP2, is a 24-month program for highly-qualified enlisted service members interested in careers as military doctors.

Candidates attend school full-time at the Prince William Campus to prepare them to apply to medical school, while remaining on active duty.

The five Army and five Air Force service members, the first class of George Mason's rigorous two-year pre-med boot camp, stepped into the spotlight on Sept. 26 to be recognized as pioneers by corporate leaders, area representatives, government delegates, and military brass.

Their backgrounds vary, their stories differ but for the next two years their lives will be intertwined.

"We really developed a strong bond in four weeks," said Army Staff Sgt. Claude Alex Blereau, who like the others, is settling into his new home in Prince William County.

The 10 military personnel from across the United States settled into class routines and scheduled homework sessions, and moved into their new residencies within the county over the last month.

With only four weeks under their belt, the students gave feedback on the program to top university officials interested in expanding the program next year.

"What advice would you give me to prepare future guys?" asked Patrick Hyde, senior enlisted leader for Uniformed Services University, dressed in his starched white uniform.

Almost in unison, they all agreed preparation for physics and trigonometry is key.

"Math is really the main subject ... it's not fresh enough," said Army Sgt. 1st Class Josh Richter.

A military veteran of 13 years and 11 combat missions overseas, Richter spoke briefly during opening remarks and said that in general, "The broad nature of the support is overwhelming" and that "The one to 10 ratio is really good."

For the students who have been away from the classroom for a while, having a grad tutor and professor office hours helped.

"Don't forget our resident tutor, Stephen Capen," said Richter, referring to Army Sgt. Stephen Capen who was standing next to him.

Being able to ask a professor to stop and break material down and having the constant interaction with staff also made them feel less on their own, the students added.

"Resiliency," said Col. Dan Burnett. "Develop resiliency."

"We appreciate your feedback," said Hyde. "We are championing issues for you."

Mason University won a nearly \$8 million, five-year contract the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences, a federally authorized medical school, to prepare the next wave of military doctors for medical school.

Candidates must possess a baccalaureate degree from an accredited academic institution with a minimum of a 3.2 grade point average and meet service requirements for commissioning.

Firefighters fill the boot

Sat., Oct. 4 | 06:02 AM



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Prince William Guide

Students in the first year of Mason's two-year, pre-med boot camp take classes in biology, chemistry, physics and calculus and prepare for the Medical College Admission Test.

The students will enjoy enviably small class sizes taught by notable Mason professors.

"Classes are going well," said Air Force Tech. Sgt. Kenny Johnson of Houston, Texas.

Approximately 100 service members are expected to pass through Mason's two-year, pre-med program during the duration of the five-year contract. Each cohort stays together as a group while students go through the two years of classes.

This year, the cohort began classes in biology, chemistry, physics and calculus.

The second year is part of Mason's GeorgeSquared program, a combined curriculum from Mason and Georgetown University's medical school, where students begin graduate level training. That includes classes that cover critical content in the first year of medical school.

Students will take such classes as cell and molecular physiology, medical biostatistics, cell biology and microanatomy, biomedical career pathways, human physiology, introduction to human anatomy, and physician and society.

After graduating, medical school is the next step.

"I want to be a doctor because I want to help our military members in their time of need," said senior Airman Matt Little, who hails from Spokane, Wash. and has been in the U.S. Air Force for four years.

The program will be a life-changer for all of the students.

A real life-changing moment came just two weeks into her program when Air Force Tech. Sgt. Lindsay Slimski gave birth to a daughter, Kailani, at one of the newest healthcare facilities in the area, Novant Health Haymarket Medical Center, which happened to be minutes from her new digs.

"I'm living in Gainesville with my mother-in-law to help with the baby," said Slimski, who had been sent home from Walter Reed Hospital the day before giving birth three weeks ago.

Ultimately the new resident, whose husband is stationed in Delaware, had to quickly locate the nearest hospital.

"We live right off of Heathcote," said Slimski. "It was so nice."

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