

Dear Members of the Green Mountain Care Board,

As this year's public discussions on the Vermont hospital budgets have unfolded, comments have focused more than once on the cost of maintaining Vermont's only academic medical center, the UVM Medical Center. While we appreciate a robust dialogue on the cost of healthcare, as this is important to everyone living in this state and throughout the nation, we want to make sure that the essential value of an academic medical center to our region and to the future of healthcare is not lost.

An academic medical center is an investment in both the people who live in our communities and in the future of quality healthcare for the region. A health system that is anchored within an academic medical center provides patients and families with leading edge treatments, gives access to clinical trials of novel therapies, and connects patients with world-class medical specialists who make state-of-the-art care possible for people without needing to travel far from home. Academic medical centers offer hope in the face of life threatening disease and injury.

Importantly, an academic medical center works in harmony with the academic institutions whose role it is to shape the future of healthcare here in Vermont and beyond through the people we educate and train. The UVM Medical Center partners with the UVM Larner College of Medicine and the UVM College of Nursing and Health Sciences where the next generation of doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals learn in an environment offering training experiences that cannot be found elsewhere in the state – a busy tertiary care hospital providing the mentorship of world-class medical experts, the state's only Level One trauma center, and an advanced neonatal intensive care unit – to name just a few of the key immersive elements unique to UVM Medical Center.

Outside UVM Medical Center, there are many other training opportunities that also provide valued service to the community. For example, we have nurse practitioners training at Appletree Bay Primary Care and the Eleanor M. Luse Center for speech-language pathology and audiology.

What is initially striking about our students is the diversity of thought and experience they bring to our small state. Currently, the Larner College of Medicine has 511 medical students and roughly 25% of them are from Vermont. The rest hail from 8 different countries and 40 states, territories, and districts in the United States.

At the University of Vermont College of Nursing and Health Sciences, we train the professionals who will bring Vermont's future healthcare needs into the present. Our expertly trained nurses and nurse practitioners, medical laboratory professionals, radiation therapists, emergency medical services personnel, physical and occupational therapists, and speech-language pathologists provide comprehensive care to meet the demands of Vermont's changing healthcare landscape through clinically focused education. Nearly 75% of the undergraduates in our College of Nursing and Health Sciences are from out-of-state. This influx of talent brings new perspectives and new energy into our learning environments – and many of these students from other places inevitably fall in love with Vermont and stay to train further as they pursue their medical, research and healthcare careers.

Furthermore, it is important to note that those medical professionals who stay in Vermont help us maintain the quality of care our community expects and work to mitigate the impact of a national shortage of healthcare workers that is not getting better anytime soon. Nurses, for example, are in short supply but our commitment to training the next generation shows promising results. Of the 109 nurses

who graduated from UVM in 2023, 43% of them are now licensed RNs in Vermont – and many are working at the UVM Medical Center filling critical staffing gaps.

Our medical residents and fellows – those who have graduated from medical school and have matched with UVM for their formative years of learning through practice – are informing the care provided to our community with new knowledge, experience, and perspectives. Each year, we have approximately 350 medical residents and fellows who receive post-medical school specialty training at UVM Medical Center. They practice under the supervision of UVM Medical Center attending physicians and are an indispensable part of the healthcare workforce. And many of our residents choose to stay in the state to learn – from 2020 to 2022, an annual average of 40% of our residents chose to remain in Vermont as attending physicians or fellows. In 2020 (the most recent year from which we have data), 41% of the primary care physicians in the state either graduated from the Larner College of Medicine or were trained at the UVM Medical Center. UVM Medical Center is a core part of the pipeline that supplies medical expertise for Vermont’s future.

These numbers demonstrate that our academic medical environment is a proven and critical talent pathway for our healthcare workforce at a time when temporary labor across all roles comes with a hefty price. Working together to grow our healthcare workforce is essential to our shared academic mission and speaks to our willingness to problem solve in areas where we can make the greatest impact.

Our commitment to an academic mission also means that we can be competitive in attracting and retaining recognized and accomplished experts in their fields who otherwise would not practice in Vermont. Not only are they contributing to the future of healthcare through their expertise and their discoveries, but they are also excited to work on innovative programs, grant-funded studies and clinical trials that benefit people here and beyond. We can confidently say that many of these brilliant clinicians would not be here without the academic component – teaching the next generation of medical professionals is what “fills their cup.”

When we talk about academic innovation, we are not just talking about research papers and lab work. We are talking about significant efforts that have a direct and immediate benefit to Vermonters. If you have not already, we encourage you to [watch this video about our Comprehensive Pain Program](#) which recently earned the 2023 Blue Cross Provider Innovation Award from Blue Cross Blue Shield for its novel, cost-effective approach to pain management or [this video about pediatric spinal anesthesia procedure](#) that was pioneered at the UVM Children’s Hospital and now benefits children nationwide. [Our recently launched CAR-T cancer treatment program](#) and our [thrombosis, hemostasis and cancer collaborative](#) both serve the entire state. These are just a few notable examples that demonstrate the value of a shared academic mission that joins an academic medical center and its essential teaching and research institutions.

Just as important, Vermonters receive opportunities to participate in clinical trials that are available in Vermont only because of our academic medical center. UVM Medical Center’s national academic reputation allows us to offer people in our community and region the ability to participate in landmark clinical trials that offer new opportunities to fight disease, such as the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine trial and the Pfizer Lyme Disease trial that is currently underway. Offering access to these trials brings Vermont to the forefront of the quest to find new answers and provides early access to potential breakthroughs to our those in our community.

Our academic medical center represents an investment in the community and in the future of the healthcare our community deserves. The essential academic partnership that binds the UVM Medical Center with its education and research partners is an anchor for the system of care that is available not just to those who are served by the UVM Health Network but for every citizen of our state and region.

Thank you,



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