The Salina program is designed for students with a strong interest in rural medicine. When my schedule permits, I like to visit the cities and towns that are vital to the success of our campus and our reason for being.

Earlier this year, I traveled more than 600 miles in two days to points in north-central and northwest Kansas. My first stop was an early morning visit with Drs. Justin Poore, Bonnie Cramer and Travis Jordan in Concordia. From there, it was on to Beloit and a visit to Dr. Craig Concannon, then to Osborne and visits with Dr. Erin Baxa and her physician’s assistant Donnie Bryant. Next, I had lunch with Dr. Justin Overmiller and Conner Barnes, a medical student completing a clerkship in Smith Center. After lunch I visited Dr. Benjamin

Students in First Class Begin Clinical Clerkships

For the first class of KU School of Medicine–Salina students, the next phase of medical education began on July 1, when they started their clinical clerkships.

Medical education is divided into two phases. Students spend the first two years learning the basic sciences and the foundations of medicine. During the third and fourth years, students receive hands-on training in various specialties at clinics and hospitals. These rotations are called clerkships.

Now third-year students, the original “Salina Eight” will spend the next 48 weeks completing clerkships in internal medicine, neurology, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, psychiatry, surgery, family medicine and geriatrics. The clerkships are supervised by physicians in Salina who are designated as assistant clerkship directors.

Students are evaluated based on the core competencies required of being a physician. They consistently rate the clerkship experience as one of the best parts of their medical education.
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The future of the campus
Norton, I visited Dr. Rodney Dill
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Continued from page 1
Message from the Director,
Executive Vice Chancellor Douglas Girod Affirms Support for Salina Campus
The University of Kansas School of Medicine’s commitment to the Salina campus is steadfast, says Douglas Girod, M.D., executive vice chancellor of the University of Kansas Medical Center and interim executive dean of the KU School of Medicine.

The future of the campus became the subject of headlines during the 2013 Kansas legislative session. At one point, it appeared as if the medical center would face an $11 million cut in fiscal year 2014. Chancellor Bernadette Gray-Little said the proposed cuts would force the medical center to reverse the recent expansions of the M.D. program, among other reductions.

“The Chancellor, Dr. Cathcart-Rake and I had many discussions with legislative leaders, and Governor Brownback paid visits to our Salina and Kansas City campuses, urging legislators to hold funding for higher education at its current levels. Meanwhile, our supporters made phone calls and wrote letters. We were gratified by this show of support, and I believe it made a difference,” Girod says.

The budget signed into law cut the medical center’s budget by $4.2 million in 2014 and $4 million in 2015. Though reductions in several academic and operational programs will be necessary, Girod says the Salina campus will remain open and that its enrollment will be not reduced.

“In a true display of pioneer spirit, we opened the Salina campus in the face of difficult economic times to address a critical physician shortage in Kansas,” Girod says. “The Salina community generously backed our effort — with real dollars and heartfelt enthusiasm. We are grateful to our Salina supporters for their generosity and for their continued belief in high-quality, innovative medical education for Kansans and a healthy future for all.”

Girod, a surgeon who ascended to the role of executive vice chancellor in February, says university officials look forward to working with community leaders to fortify the School of Medicine’s presence in Salina. “We’re committed to this campus for the long haul,” he says.

Executive Vice Chancellor Douglas Girod Affirms Support for Salina Campus

Executive Vice Chancellor Douglas Girod, M.D.

University of Kansas Medical Center Executive Vice Chancellor Douglas Girod, M.D.

Stephenson in Phillipsburg and then
Courtney States and Robert Hartman
with the Dane Hansen Foundation in Logan. The foundation has been a strong supporter of our campus, providing resources for facility improvements, operational expenses and student scholarships.

Following an overnight stop in Norton, I visited Dr. Rodney Dill in Atwood, Dr. Mary Beth Miller in Bird City and Dr. Rebecca Allard in St. Francis. From there it was on to Goodland, with brief visits with their practitioners there, followed by stops in Colby (Drs. Darren Matchell and Brewer Kellogg), Quinter (Drs. Victor Nemechek and Shelly Grunert), and Russell (Dr. Earl Merkel).

Many of the physicians I had met when they were residents at the Smoky Hill Family Medicine Residency program in Salina. Others I met for the first time. Whether the face was new or familiar, I was pleased by how many doctors expressed their support for our campus and said they were willing to host our students during their third- and fourth-year clinical clerkships.

I look forward to my next road trip.

The Spotlight

Faculty Spotlight: Michael Robinson, Ph.D.

Michael Robinson, the associate director of basic sciences at the Salina campus, grew up in Derby, England. The son of a butcher, he worked alongside his father before pursuing a career as a scientist, eventually obtaining a Ph.D. in parasitology at the University of Nottingham.

“Being a butcher gave me a little impetus to do what I eventually became interested in,” he says. “We used to occasionally see parasites in the animals and these fascinated me.”

Robinson first moved to the United States to complete a fellowship at the Mayo Clinic. He completed a post-doctorate at the University of Wyoming and has taught at schools in London, North Dakota, Georgia, the Commonwealth of Dominica and the Bahamas.

Favorite subject to teach: Infectious diseases. Immunology is my training and really what I love. But immunology has no meaning in isolation. Yes, everybody has an immune system, but you never think about it. The only time you think about it is if something goes wrong, and with the immune system this usually presents itself as an infection.

Why he’s drawn to medical education: “I’ve taught probably three or four thousand medical students by now. I like to think I’ve made a difference in their lives. Working in a medical school is a way that you benefit society and the physicians who serve that society, and I think that’s a very worthwhile job. In the end, when you look back and say, “I’d like to think that I’ve made a difference to a large number of people,” teaching medical students is one way to do that.”

On working at University of Kansas: “Of my mind, this is a very good school. It’s got great faculty and administrators who really try and do their best. Career-wise, it’s been a great pleasure working for KU.”

On working at the Salina campus: “I believe that this campus is a success story. I think the students are happy, and they are successful academically. The way the community has supported this venture is truly remarkable and, in particular, the way the local physicians have supported this is really amazing. I have a number of physicians who I can call upon who I know will always do an excellent job of teaching the students.”

Student Spotlight: Jeff Horinek

Jeff Horinek played linebacker at Colorado State University. The Atwood, Kan., native started for four years and served as a team captain for three.

“I wasn’t the best football player,” he says. “But I worked harder than everybody else, so I got to play a lot. In school, I still had to study a lot.”

Though he was interested in becoming a physician, Horinek opted against taking pre-medical classes at CSU; he worried about his ability to balance the coursework with the demands of football. He realized that he may have sold himself short when he finished with a 3.91 grade point average and was a finalist for the Draddy Trophy, the “academic Heisman” presented by the National Football Foundation. “After I got done with football, I was able to start thinking, ‘Hey, I am smart enough,’” he says.

As a Draddy Trophy finalist, Horinek received a post-graduate education scholarship. He used the money to pay for science courses at Colby Community College and Fort Hays State University (where he met his wife, Traicie). After initially thinking he wanted to train as a physician’s assistant, he decided to work toward applying to medical school. He was accepted into the 2012 entering class at the University of Kansas School of Medicine.

“I couldn’t imagine it going it better than it has,” says Horinek, now 27.

“Obviously, if I could go back in time, I probably would have majored in biology. But things wouldn’t be as good as they are now. I really love about it.”

Favorite module: Cardiopulmonary. Why he wanted to attend the Salina campus: “I’m from a really small town. I like the idea of a small town. I liked the idea of a small class environment. What he likes about being a Salina student: ‘It’s small enough that you see the same faces every once in a while. But it’s big enough that there’s stuff to do. The community has been super-welcoming. Where we go to church has been wonderful. The doctors around here are great. People treat us better than we probably deserve to be treated. But I can’t complain about that.”
“Our students are very excited to begin the clinical phase of their medical education,” says Scott Owings, M.D., associate director for clinical experiences. “Students ultimately go to medical school to be rewarded the privilege and honor of caring for patients. After many years of hard work and dedication they finally have the opportunity to be directly involved with patient care.”

Student Rany Gilpatrick says she is looking forward to the neurology rotation, which is led by Trent Davis, M.D. “He has facilitated some of our small group sessions, and I liked the way he presented information,” she says.

In addition to Davis, the other assistant clerkship directors are: Henry Reed, M.D., and Jon Richards, M.D. (internal medicine); Chris Graber, M.D. (ob-gyn); Alisa Bridge, M.D. (pediatrics); George Jerkovich, M.D., and Veronica Amey, M.D. (psychiatry); Chris Rupe, M.D., and Michael Johnson, M.D. (surgery); and Sara Johnston, M.D., and Chantel Long, M.D. (family medicine). Owings leads the geriatrics rotation.

Student Erik Dill is most eager to begin the family medicine rotation. “I came to med school because of my experiences with a family doc and look forward to spending the day in that environment,” he says. “It will definitely be nice to apply some of this knowledge we’ve learned over the last two years.”

Or as student Jill Corpstein puts it: “I am looking forward to all rotations that include working with people instead of only books!”