

Arizona Medical Schools Offer Free Tuition for Primary Care Commitment

The University of Arizona (UA) Colleges of Medicine in Tucson and Phoenix will offer free tuition starting in the spring semester for qualifying medical students agreeing to practice primary care (1). To be considered for free tuition, applicants must be an Arizona resident and current full-time medical student. A minimum commitment of 2 years practicing in an underserved Arizona community must be started within 6 years of graduation from medical school and completed within 10 years of graduation.

The money will come from part of the \$8 million annual funding approved by the Arizona Legislature in May. According to the press release, nearly 100 students or about 10% of the student body could get free tuition at the two medical schools. Currently, tuition is \$31,652/year in Tucson and \$33,402 in Phoenix.

Arizona currently meets only 40% of its primary care physician (PCP) need, according to the Health Resources and Services Administration. Arizona ranks 42nd among states for total active PCPs at 77.9 per 100,000 (the US average is 91.7) according to the university's physician workforce report published in October.

In addition to enlarging the primary care workforce, the waived tuition is meant to reduce financial barriers to even applying to medical school with the looming promise of student debt. Nearly half of medical school graduates owe more than \$200,000 in medical school loans, according to the latest Medscape Residents Salary and Debt Report.

UA joins a growing list of medical schools offering free tuition including New York University, the University of Houston, Kaiser Permanente, and Weill Cornell. None of the others require practicing primary care as a requirement for receiving the free tuition.

Reference

1. Marcia Frellick M. U of Arizona offers free med school tuition for primary care. Medscape. December 6, 2019. Available at: https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/922275?nlid=132930_5461&src=wnl_dne_191209_mscpedit&uac=9273DT&impID=2196790&faf=1 (accessed 12/9/19).