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White Coat Ceremony welcomes Class of 2017

PEORIA, III. – (Aug. 8, 2014) The University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria on Friday welcomed 59 new, incoming medical students, many of whom may become future central Illinois physicians.

Nearly 60 percent of the primary care physicians in the Peoria area attended the University of Illinois College of Medicine as a medical student or trained in a program sponsored by UICOMP.

“The white coat is a symbol of the profession,” says Linda Rowe, EdD, UICOMP’s Assistant Dean for Student Affairs. “This is a memorable way to welcome the newest members of the UICOMP family.”

More than 200 people attended the ceremony, including students, their families and College of Medicine faculty, which was held at the Jump Trading Simulation & Education Center. Dr. Robert Sawicki provided the keynote address. Presenting the white coats were Dr. Robert Sparrow, Chair of the Peoria Medical Alumni Council, and Dr. Sara Rusch, UICOMP Regional Dean.

Several U.S. medical schools initiated this movement in the 1980s in an attempt to remind emerging physicians of the importance of their role as compassionate, empathetic healers. For students, it symbolizes moving forward in their careers as they enter the patient care setting for the first time.

“It symbolizes their lifelong commitment to providing excellence in patient care,” said UICOMP Regional Dean Sara Rusch, MD. “It is a special ceremony that faculty are privileged to share with our students and their families.”

National Statistics:

- Nearly half, 46.8 percent, of physicians who graduated from a public medical or osteopathic school were practicing in the state from which they graduated, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges.
- Two-thirds, 66.6 percent, of the physicians who completed both their undergraduate medical education and graduate medical education in the same state remained in that state to practice.

- Shortage of doctors by 2020: 90,000
- Shortage of primary care physicians: 45,000
- Shortage of surgeons and specialists: 46,000
- Physicians likely to retire by 2020: 250,000
- Americans entering the health care system in 2014: 32 million
- Time from the start of med school until new doctors enter practice: 7 to 14 years or more, depending on specialty.

The University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria (UICOMP) was established by the Illinois Legislature in 1970 to address physician shortages and increase educational opportunities in downstate Illinois. UICOMP, one of four campuses that make up one of the largest public medical schools in the U.S., educates about 150 medical students annually and more than 250 physician residents each year within one of its 19 graduate medical programs.

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