Chapman Master-Planned Irvine Campus Gets Bigger

EDUCATION: New programs, grounds in works

By SHERRY HSIEH

Chapman University has been aggressively expanding its graduate health science campus in Irvine since it opened in 2014, including adding programs—computational neuroscience and cognitive and brain sciences—and more than tripling its footprint to 25 acres. The new programs are part of the Institute of Brain and Behavior, which opens this fall.

The university isn’t looking to grow its presence piecemeal but to put its imprint on training care professionals needed in today’s health systems.

The Harry and Diane Rinker Health Science Campus, which has five buildings totaling about 450,000 square feet, is home to the School of Pharmacy and Crean College of Health and Behavioral Sciences, which includes programs in physical therapy, physician assistant and communication sciences and disorders.

Geriatric medicine figures largely in OC, where Newport Beach and San Clemente, the cities with the biggest numbers of older residents, have 20% and 19% 65-and-older populations, according to Chapman’s OC Model Report. The report projects that by 2040, OC will reach the highest ratio of senior citizens to working-age population among California metropolitan areas with more than 1 million people.

“We are very cognizant of the challenges in OC. Geriatric health will become more significant, and mental health is enormous,” said Jaqueen Hill, professor and dean of Crean College of Health and Behavioral Sciences. “Everything from prescription to physical therapy to speech therapy … is part of that healthcare delivery.”

Physician Assistants

Hill pointed out that the two-year physician assistant studies master program, which enrolled its first 25 students this year, makes up a big part of the discussion on older adults care.

“If you look at how healthcare is today, the physician-based model is suffering. In California, we have too few physicians graduating and approximately 30% of Californian physicians are over 69,” Hill said. The Association of American Medical Colleges projects that the primary care physician shortage will grow by approximately 12,000 to 31,000 by 2025.

Hill said physician assistants must be trained to take on more primary care duties to help free up doctors for higher-level tasks. Physician assistants don’t practice independently like nurse practitioners, and most states require the presence of a supervising physician. Their duties typically include performing physicals, taking patient histories, prescribing medication, ordering and interpreting tests, and assisting in surgery.

“There’s a training component missing for physician assistants. They are very much like a family practice doctor—they do everything,” Hill said. “By extending the training and getting that master degree, they can be a significant player.”

Holistic Approach

Pharmacists will likely also play a bigger role than they now do, according to Hill. As “medication experts,” they can work with medical practitioners and other healthcare providers to better care for patients in areas such as medication management to make sure patients—particularly those with several health conditions who take multiple medications—are taking the right one.

More importantly, Hill said, pharmacists is indispensible in personalized medicine, tailoring therapy to the patient’s unique genetic composition.

The school of pharmacy offers a master of science in pharmaceutical sciences and a three-year accelerated doctorate of pharmacy program that was approved by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges Senior College and University Commission last year.

“One of the things we do at this campus is training healthcare professionals to work as a team, offering an interdisciplinary, interprofessional education,” Hill said, adding that Chapman’s vision for its 1,725 campus is a holistic healthcare delivery model that involves a wide spectrum of professionals, including physician assistants, pharmacists and physical and speech therapists.

The Irvine campus is home to 71 faculty members. The university will have more than 600 students by fall and it hopes to grow the student body to 900 students in the next two years.

“We grow very significantly in three years,” Hill said. “You have to do it in a comprehensive way and just jump in.”

Growth Continues

The campus stemmed from two adjacent research and development buildings at Jeronimo Road and Alton Parkway that Chapman acquired in 2012 for $20 million. The school put an additional $24 million into renovations and upgrades.

The complex received a $15 million gift in 2013 from Harry and Diane Rinker of Newport Beach to support the expansion. Harry Rinker owns The Rinker Co., a real estate investment and development firm in Costa Mesa.

Chapman added 1,725 square feet to campus last month. It paid about $15 million for the property, which comprises a 59,000-square-foot building with a two-story parking structure.

Chapman isn’t finished; its most immediate plan involves enhancing on-site landscaping to create a more campus-like environment for students.