

## SPECIAL SECTION – EDUCATION

### Students make a difference in podiatric medicine – by Elizabeth Valente

**THREE YEARS** ago Bud Johnston had a tough decision to make. Wanting to pursue a doctorate in podiatric medicine, the South Dakota native had eight schools from which to choose. Ultimately, Johnston chose the school with a 92-year history – the California School of Podiatric Medicine (CSPM) at Samuel Merritt College (SMC). “What stood out about this school is that we get to work in clinics by our second year,” he said, “while other students wait until the end of their third year.”

From athletes to the elderly, Johnston says it's the interaction he has with patients that makes his dream of becoming a Doctor of Podiatric Medicine (DPM) real. “In podiatry, we get to see every aspect of life. One day we saw a trauma, athletes and diabetic wounds, all in the same morning. It's never dull.”

That's the type of attitude Eric Stamps, DPM, assistant dean for Clinical Affairs at SMC, tries to instill in all his students. “At our school, by the time the students are in their second year they begin to evaluate the patient, make recommendations for treatment, and if the clinician agrees with their prognosis, the students will carry out treatment under supervision, depending on the procedure.”

It's no wonder why CSPM has a waiting list, admitting only 48 students a year. Since 1914, the school, formerly known as the California School of Chiropractic, was located in San Francisco's Western Addition. In 2002 it merged with Samuel Merritt College and moved to the college's Oakland Campus.

The educational program leading to the DPM degree consists of a comprehensive curriculum in the basic medical and clinical sciences. The didactic course work is

completed during the first three years of the four-year program with more emphasis on foot and ankle and lower extremity problems.

For clinicians, the focus and emphasis becomes more apparent during the summertime. “People look at their feet more in the summer and we tend to see more problems like ingrown toenails and diabetic foot wounds,” said Dr. Stamps.

To help learn more about foot problems and preventable care, students and CSPM faculty are connecting with community podiatrists in Oakland and Alameda County to help educate people at various health fairs and foot screenings, like Oakland Homeless Connect. The non-profit fair is designed to connect the homeless with important services, like foot screening. “They (the homeless) are a population with a different demographic,” said Johnston. “Their feet problems stem more from wet dirty socks that masquerade the foot, so we take care of their feet by giving them dry socks, moisturizers and help build awareness that can be a problem if no medical assistance is requested.”

Along with providing meaningful community service and excellent education and training, the CSPM mission also provides innovative research in fields like biomechanics. “Someone playing basketball wearing running shoes with no lateral support, or returning from jumping motion with no stability, could end up with a serious ankle sprain,” said Dr. Stamps.

CSPM was a pioneer in foot and ankle biomechanics and still continues to be one of the most sought after specialties in the podiatric field. “People are looking to maintain a healthy lifestyle as we age, and one thing they need to do is walk, but if it

hurts you are not going to walk,” said Dr. Stamps. “We try to help people ambulate, measuring carefully the range of motion in various joints, shoe modifications, inserts and padding.”

According to the American Podiatric Medical Association, nearly half of all Americans suffer from foot problems at some point in their lives. “It's our job to educate our students to seek and treat the problems,” said Dr. Stamps.

Samuel Merritt College is affiliated with Alta Bates Summit Medical Center and Sutter Health. SMC was founded in

1909, and has been educating health professionals for nearly 100 years. Along with offering a doctorate degree in podiatric medicine, the college also offers undergraduate and master's degrees in nursing, occupational therapy, physician assistant and a doctoral degree in physical therapy. SMC was the first institution of higher education to receive the prestigious Governor's Quality Award.

*Elizabeth Valente is the associate director of publications and media relations at Samuel Merritt College.*

### Samuel Merritt names interim president

**SCOT FOSTER**, PhD, has been appointed interim president of Samuel Merritt College (SMC) by its Board of Regents. President Sharon Diaz is on sabbatical until January 2008.

Dr. Foster has served as the institution's provost and chief operating officer (COO), and will continue his commitment to excellence in academic programming that has hall-marked the reputation of its graduates for nearly a century. Specifically he will maintain a focus on exploiting educational innovations in health science instruction, building expert faculty and staff, and recruiting the most highly qualified students available.

During his six-month term, Dr. Foster and the college's senior team will provide the focused leadership required for the college to implement a variety of strategic projects that will realize the SMC vision of



*Scot Foster, Ph.D.*

becoming nationally recognized as a premier, multi-specialty health sciences institution. Specifically, he will oversee the full integration of three new satellite campuses in San Francisco, San Mateo and Sacramento into the Oakland-based service system of the main campus.

Other responsibilities will include leading the institution through a cycle of accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, and implementing measurement systems for student learning and institutional performance.

In addition, Dr. Foster will work with Alta Bates Summit Medical Center (ABSMC) to outline a substantial expansion and improved campus facilities on the Oakland campus congruent with new construction plans contemplated by ABSMC.

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