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## **Correcting the record: WSU consultant's medical school study deeply flawed**

The study prepared by Washington State University consultant MGT of America to make the case for a WSU medical school contains a number of deep flaws. Many of the key justifications cited for starting, funding, and accrediting a second public medical school in Washington are based upon faulty assumptions, omissions, and erroneous data that draw into question many of the report's central conclusions. These flaws raise significant concern about the actual feasibility of a WSU medical school and are important questions that require answers.

### **Using existing WWAMI resources for a new medical school**

The MGT-WSU study makes all cost assumptions based on re-directing state appropriated WWAMI funds to start a WSU medical school. In fact, all of the existing faculty and space resources for medical education at WSU-Spokane have been explicitly provided by the legislature over the past several years for the WWAMI partnership with the University of Washington. **You can't spend the same public dollar twice.** Building a second medical school by re-directing existing public dollars means building a WSU medical school at the expense of the UW's WWAMI Spokane program and its students.

### **Erroneous calculation: cost per student**

Through the media, WSU officials have claimed, "the cost per student [at a new WSU medical school] would still be half as much as the cost at UW." Unfortunately, WSU's consultant based the cost assumption for the UW's WWAMI program on incorrect data. This egregious error resulted in the consultant claiming a WWAMI cost figure *three times higher* (\$214,997) than the actual cost per medical student.

WWAMI is one of the most cost-effective programs in the country. In fact, the average cost of educating a UW-WWAMI student is roughly \$70,000, compared to \$105,000 to 150,000 nationally. This amount includes both

tuition and a state-supported subsidy. MGT's cited cost per student of \$98,000 for an independent WSU medical school is actually **30 percent higher** than UW.

### **The UW pioneered community-based medical education**

The WSU consultant has said that a community-based model is the primary driver for these cost savings and would be cheaper than the UW's "traditional" model of medical education. In fact, **the University of Washington pioneered the community-based medical education model. It's one of many reasons the UW School of Medicine is the No. 1 primary care medical school in the country and has been ranked No. 1 in family medicine and rural training for 22 years.** Establishing a second, community-based program in Spokane, rather than expanding the UW's WWAMI program, is simply a duplication of what is already being done in the state. **A second medical school simply adds costs and university administration — not the best use of taxpayer dollars.**

### **Disingenuous to claim to do both**

As noted above, the WSU-hired consultant's costs for an independent medical school rely on re-directing existing public funds from WWAMI to a start-up WSU medical school. WSU regents made clear in their actions last week that they expect WSU to continue as a WWAMI partner and that a new WSU medical school is not an "either/or proposition." **But without these existing resources** — which WSU will need to use unless it seeks the full cost of at least \$47 million annually from Washington taxpayers — **the WWAMI program would be left with a multi-million-dollar deficit, imperiling its faculty and future in Spokane.** This begs the question of how WSU can claim to want to stay as a partner in the same successful WWAMI partnership that it also seeks to defund, and how it will establish a medical school without a significant cost to taxpayers and medical students.

### **The critical importance of medical residencies**

**The greatest predictor of where a doctor will stay and practice depends on where they do their residency — not where they go to medical school. By 2017, the U.S. will graduate more doctors from medical school than we have residency positions.** We could put a new medical school at every university in the state and it wouldn't guarantee one more doctor for Eastern Washington. The UW is actively working to increase residencies across the state of Washington, especially in Eastern Washington, as part of its WWAMI expansion plan. Without residencies, where would WSU graduates go?

## **WWAMI can ramp up quickly to meet the need for doctors in the state**

The University of Washington WWAMI medical education program is both cost effective and abundantly scalable. The current UW proposal to double the class size in Spokane is unlimited in its ability to grow to or exceed the level being proposed by WSU's independent start-up. The UW proposal represents a growth plan originally developed in close partnership with WSU and the Spokane community.

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