

News Release

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TTUHSC's Affordable Medical Education Empowers West Texas Students to Serve *White Coat Ceremony Welcomes the Class of 2029 to the Medical Field*

It begins in small towns and tight-knit communities, in school gyms turned makeshift clinics, on long drives to the nearest hospital, or in quiet moments when a young person decides they want to make a difference. For many future physicians, that moment was shaped right here in West Texas.

For 57% of the incoming class at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) School of Medicine, the path to becoming a physician is deeply personal. Of the 182 future doctors, 104 have roots in West Texas — a region they are committed to serving.

On Friday, July 25, these students marked a defining moment in their journey at the White Coat Ceremony, symbolizing not only the start of their medical education but also their dedication to the communities that shaped them.

“This is the most competitive class we’ve ever welcomed — but more importantly — it’s the most empathetic,” said Felix Morales, M.D., associate dean of admissions for the TTUHSC School of Medicine. “These students not only bring strong academic backgrounds, but also a genuine commitment to serve others, especially those in rural communities. That’s something you can’t teach.”

The White Coat Ceremony is a time-honored tradition across medical schools, symbolizing a student’s entrance into the medical profession. But at TTUHSC, the event holds extra meaning: It’s about community.

TTUHSC has long focused on serving West Texas and rural populations, and this year’s class reflects that mission. Many of the incoming students are first-generation college graduates. Others are children of local ranchers, teachers and nurses who are driven by a desire to give back to the communities that raised them.

“Our students choose medicine not just for the science, but for the service,” Morales added. “That’s what makes this class so special.”

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That same spirit of purpose drives how they are supported. TTUHSC is leading the charge when it comes to affordability. Amid rising national tuition rates, TTUHSC remains one of the most affordable medical schools in the country according to the 2025 U.S. News & World Report.

“At TTUHSC, we’re committed to keeping medical education accessible and affordable, while maintaining the highest national academic standards and performance for these students” said John DeToledo, M.D., School of Medicine dean and executive vice president of clinical affairs. “We are very conscientious of the financial burden on our students because we believe that investing in our students is an investment in the future of health care.”

DeToledo explained that this approach allows TTUHSC to attract dedicated, high-achieving students who are driven by a sense of purpose and often choose to serve in the very communities they came from.

That family-focused, mission-driven culture is something students say they notice the moment they arrive. From mentorship to peer support, the TTUHSC community is designed to nurture students not only academically, but emotionally.

DeToledo said as the white coats were placed on their shoulders, each student took on more than a professional symbol — they carry a promise.

“A promise to care, to return and to lead with heart. These are not just future doctors. Many are West Texas’ own who were raised in its communities, shaped by its values and now answering the call to serve.” DeToledo said.