

# SWOSU Students and Faculty Headed to Panama for Medical Mission

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Southwestern Oklahoma State University students and faculty headed on a medical mission trip to Panama during spring break are (front from left): Katherine Maynard, Mustang; Meagen Harrel, Elk City; and Tara Schultz, Weatherford. Second row from left—Annette DeSantiago, Guymon; Mai Tran, Moore; Samantha Caudle, Stillwater; and School of Nursing Instructor Juliana Bell. Third row from left—Bailey Bell, Weatherford; Katrina Holsaeter, Edmond; Bailey Spears, Amber; and College of Pharmacy Assistant Professor Dr. Nina Morris. Fourth row from left—SWOSU College of Pharmacy Rural Health Network Coordinator Dr. Randy Curry; Kyrsten Smith, Ralston; College of Pharmacy Associate Dean Dr. David Ralph; Micah Majors, Edmond; Te'onna Adams Sun City (CA); David Truong, Moore; and Ryan Varghese, Mustang.

Eighteen Southwestern Oklahoma State University students and faculty from the School of Nursing and College of Pharmacy in Weatherford will head to Panama during the upcoming Spring Break (March 15-23) as part of a medical mission to help serve the people in a rural, isolated area of the Darién Province.

The SWOSU group is working on the mission through the Global Brigades organization, the largest student-led global health and sustainable development organization in the world. Thousands of university students and professionals from around the world have volunteered through Global Brigades to work in partnership with community members in rural, under-resourced communities throughout the world to help resolve global health and economic disparities.

Dr. Randy Curry, coordinator of the SWOSU College of Pharmacy Rural Health Network, said the organization facilitates 7 to 10 day programs called medical brigades in many parts of the world including several rural Central American areas of Panama, Nicaragua, Honduras and in the African country of Ghana.

The SWOSU Medical Brigade includes eight students and one faculty from the nursing program including: Bailey Bell, Weatherford; Bailey Spears, Amber; Katherine Maynard, Mustang; Katrina Holsaeter, Edmond; Meagen Harrel, Elk City; Micah Majors, Edmond; Mai Tran, Moore; Te'onna Adams, Sun City (CA); and instructor Juliana Bell. One additional registered nurse will accompany the group, Sarah Purdon of Cordell who works at Great Plains Regional Medical Center in Elk City.

The six student pharmacists in the group include: Samantha Caudle, Stillwater; David Truong, Moore; Annette DeSantiago, Guymon; Ryan Varghese, Mustang; Tara Schultz, Weatherford; and Kyrsten Smith, Ralston. Pharmacy faculty who are accompanying the group include: Curry, Associate Dean Dr. David Ralph and Assistant Professor Dr. Nina Morris.

The SWOSU Global Brigades mission trip to Panama was organized as a result of the outreach efforts of the SWOSU College of Pharmacy's Rural Health Network. Curry said the mission trip will allow students to become actively involved in a rural, medically-underserved part of the world.

“The students can expect to come away from the experience with a greater appreciation for the challenges in delivering health care in rural areas, along with a greater understanding of the value that they can bring to the work of a healthcare team,” Curry said.

The SWOSU group will take approximately \$5,000 worth of medications/dental supplies and educational materials for children. The students have raised a majority of these funds in addition to raising their own trip cost of approximately \$1,700.

The experience is designed to foster the students’ development of strong community service orientation as they begin their careers in a healthcare field.