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The Chicago School Announces Opening of the Illinois College of Osteopathic Medicine (IllinoisCOM)

Chicago's First New Medical School in Nearly 100 Years Welcomes Inaugural Class of 91 Medical Students to Campus for Orientation Week and White Coat Ceremony

CHICAGO, IL – July 20, 2026 – The Chicago School today welcomed its first cohort of students to the Illinois College of Osteopathic Medicine (IllinoisCOM), Chicago's first new medical school in nearly a century. IllinoisCOM will educate a new generation of mental health-informed osteopathic physicians prepared to address the nation's growing shortage of healthcare providers, particularly in primary care and underserved communities.

IllinoisCOM is built on The Chicago School's long-standing belief that mental and physical health are inseparable. Drawing on the university's deep expertise in psychology and behavioral health, IllinoisCOM will embed mental-physical health integration into the core of its curriculum, preparing future physicians to recognize and address the full spectrum of health needs across any specialty. A signature Mind and Medicine course series will focus on behavioral influences on chronic illness, mental health screenings, social determinants of health, and the realities of provider stress and burnout.

"Nearly 60 percent of patients who receive mental health treatment do as a recommendation from their primary-care physician, yet many physicians have limited exposure to behavioral healthcare," said Michele Nealon, Psy.D., president of The Chicago School. "IllinoisCOM is intentionally closing that gap by training osteopathic physicians who are grounded in mental health literacy, who understand the social and structural factors that shape health, and who are ready to provide truly integrated, compassionate care."

IllinoisCOM is also a strategic response to an urgent national and state-wide healthcare workforce challenge. According to [The Association of American Medical Colleges \(AAMC\)](#), the United States is projected to face a shortage of up to 86,000 physicians by 2036. Reflecting that trend, [The Robert Graham Center](#) forecasts that by 2030, Illinois will need an additional 1,063 primary-care physicians [PCP], a 12% increase compared to the state's 2010 PCP workforce.

When fully operational, IllinoisCOM will enroll 170 students per year. Across four years of training, the college will educate approximately 680 osteopathic medical students at any given time, graduating a steady cohort of professionals prepared to practice integrated, patient-centered care and help close the gap in communities that need them most.

"We are living through a time of intense strain on healthcare providers," Dr. Nealon continued. "Physicians are carrying enormous stress, and far too many are leaving the profession or suffering in silence. At IllinoisCOM, we are not only training students to care for patients; we are training them to care for themselves, to recognize burnout, and to seek and offer support. That is a cornerstone of our curriculum."

Located in Chicago's West Loop, IllinoisCOM is part of a new 247,000-square-foot campus shared by The Chicago School and The Community Solution Education System, of which The Chicago School is a member. The eight-story facility will serve as a state-of-the-art hub for collaborative learning and features advanced classrooms and lecture halls, research laboratories, virtual reality tools, patient simulators, interdisciplinary simulation spaces, and areas designed to support modern, team-based, integrated care education.

"IllinoisCOM's curriculum was designed to equip future physicians with the clinical skills, mental health literacy, and resilience they need to practice excellent medicine over the course of a long career," said John Lucas, DO, founding dean of IllinoisCOM. "Students will learn to work in integrated teams, to listen deeply to patients, and to provide care that is both scientifically rigorous and profoundly human."

Beyond its educational mission, IllinoisCOM is expected to serve as a powerful economic engine for Chicago and Illinois. Over the next decade, the college is projected to generate nearly \$1 billion in economic impact for the region, contributing tens of millions of dollars annually to the local economy, creating hundreds of high-quality jobs, and strengthening the city's healthcare and innovation ecosystem through expanded talent and long-term growth.

IllinoisCOM's opening also marks a milestone for The Community Solution Education System.

"This is a profound moment for our System community," said Michael Horowitz, Ph.D., chancellor of The Community Solution Education System. "IllinoisCOM is the second medical school within our System and is a powerful example of our shared commitment to educational innovation, student achievement, and preparing qualified professionals to meet some of society's greatest needs. The impact of this collaborative effort will be felt for generations to come."

IllinoisCOM received pre-accreditation from the Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation (COCA) in 2025 and is on track to graduate its first cohort of students in 2030. The inaugural class will participate in the college's first White Coat Ceremony on Sunday, July 26, marking an important milestone as students formally begin their journey into the medical profession.

About The Chicago School

The Chicago School is a leading nonprofit university dedicated to training professionals for careers that improve the health of individuals, organizations, and communities. By combining education, innovation, community, and impact, The Chicago School Approach provides students with a practical and solutions-oriented education in an array of academic programs across psychology, medicine, business, counseling, and behavioral sciences. With more than 6,000 students and locations in Chicago, Dallas, Southern California, and Washington, D.C., the university's extensive network of community partnerships provides applicable training and networking opportunities.

The Chicago School is accredited by the WASC Senior College and University Commission. The Chicago School is a proud member of The Community Solution Education System, an integrated nonprofit system of colleges and universities working together to advance student success and community impact. To learn more, visit www.thechicagoschool.edu.