

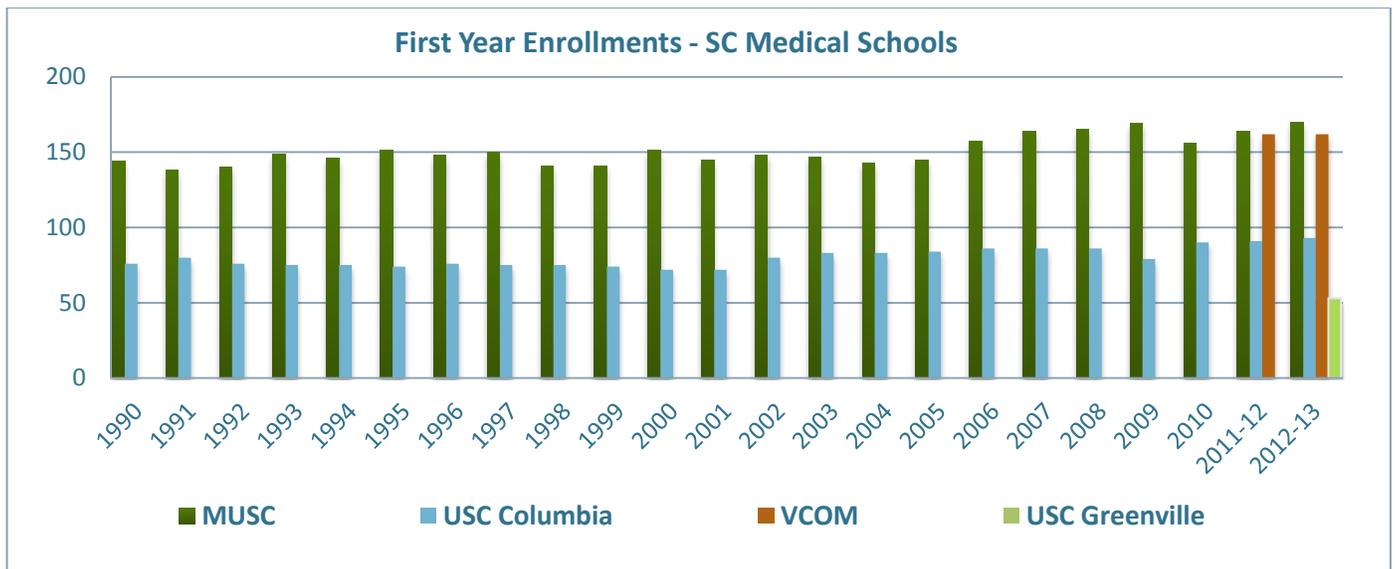


POLICY BRIEF • September 2013

*Trends in Student Enrollment and Graduation
in South Carolina Medical Schools*

South Carolina is now served by four medical schools: the College of Medicine at the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) in Charleston, the USC School of Medicine (USC) in Columbia, the USC School of Medicine Greenville in Greenville (USC-Greenville), and the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM) in Spartanburg. These last two schools of medicine have opened within the last 3 years and have not yet had a graduating class. Graduates are expected in 2015 from the VCOM program and in 2016 from USCG.

The two new schools of medicine are having an immediate and significant impact on the number of new physicians being trained in the state. The first year enrollment chart below shows that, beginning with the 2011-12 academic year, the number of first year enrollees at VCOM (n=162) matched the size of the first year enrollees at MUSC (n=164). In the 2012-13 academic year, the UNC-Greenville campus admitted a first year class of 53 students. The result is that the number of new students entering medical school each year in South Carolina has gone from a total of 254 in the 2010-11 academic year to a total of 478 in the 2012-13 academic year: an increase of 88.2%.

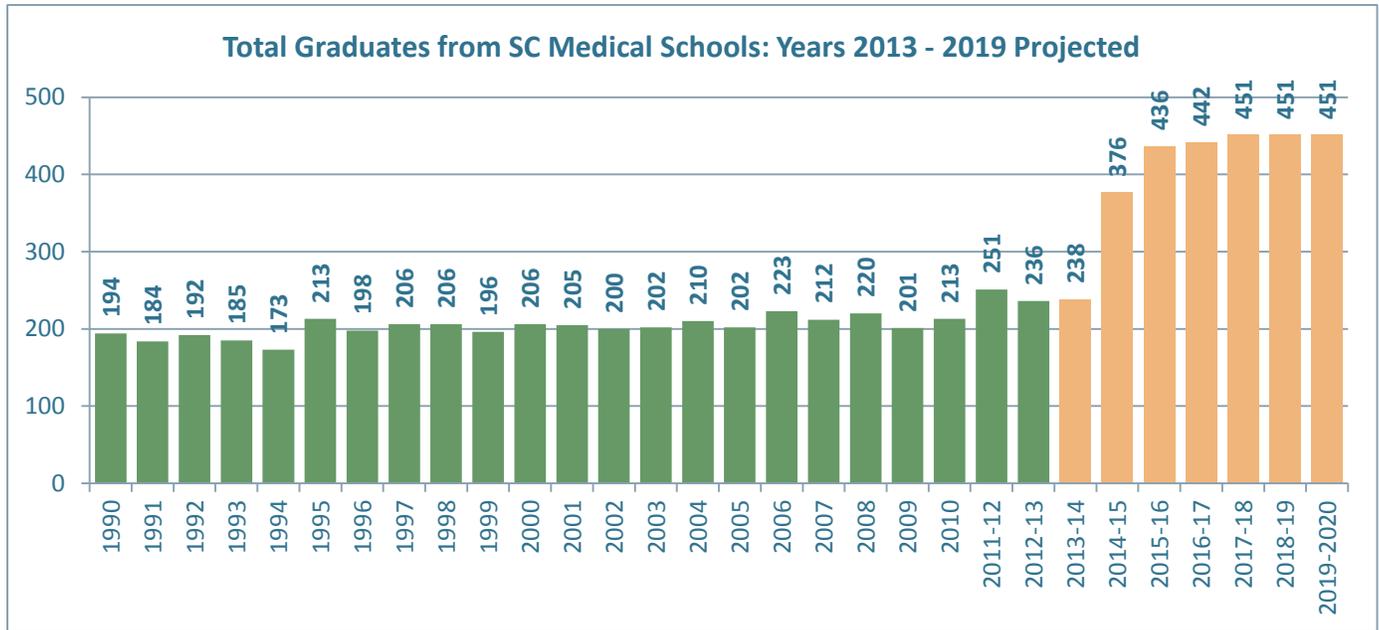


This increase in the size of medical school classes will begin to be reflected in graduation figures in 2015. Although not everyone who starts in medical school ultimately graduates, the great majority do (over 90%). Our analysis of first year enrollment trends and graduations since 1980 shows that, on average, graduating classes are approximately 92% in size of the first year enrollments 4 years prior. The chart on the next page shows the trend in the total number of graduates from medical schools in South Carolina. Future years have been estimated, based on first year enrollment class size in each school and the assumption that 92% of an entering cohort will graduate four years later.



Trends in Student Enrollment and Graduation in South Carolina Medical Schools

The impact of the VCOM program on the total number of graduates in the state can be clearly seen in the projection of graduate numbers for the 2014-15 academic year. Note that the projection figures are likely to be a conservative estimate as the new schools may increase enrollments in future years and some students may take more than four years to graduate.



This rapid increase in the number of new physicians graduating from our state's medical schools is likely to have both positive and negative consequences.

- A greater number of physicians graduating from medical school in South Carolina should translate into a greater number of new physicians choosing to practice in South Carolina in the future. This is especially important at this point in time, as about 25% of the physicians currently practicing in the state are nearing or past retirement age.
- More physician graduates but an unchanging number of graduate-level medical education opportunities (i.e. residency training programs) will mean that a greater proportion of our new physicians will have to leave the state in order to finish their education. Historical trends suggest that when a new physician leaves the state for residency training, he or she is less likely to return to South Carolina to practice than if they had been able to complete their residency training in-state.

Sources: First year enrollment data were supplied by the respective medical schools. Graduation data prior to 2005 were obtained from the SC Commission on Higher Education. Graduation data for later years were obtained from the respective schools. Graduate projections were developed by the Office for Healthcare Workforce Analysis and Planning.