MSU med students jump for joy on landmark day at new campus

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The clock struck noon, and for two dozen students in Flint, four years of medical school came down to opening an envelope. All at once, about 35 fourth-year Michigan State University medical students opened letters telling them where they would be matched for their residency work.

The room in the new MSU College of Human Medicine Flint campus at Harrison and First erupted with jumping, cheering, tears and hugs.

This was the first class to participate in what is called Match Day at the MSU Flint building since it was unveiled in November.

"It was perfect. This was a really special year for us because we got to have it here," said Ghazala Imran, a fourth-year MSU medical student who will go to her first choice, Loma Linda University in California. "It’s kind of like our class is christening the building. Our class is the first ones to experience like this."

Imran was the first student to jump out of her seat after opening her envelope Friday. The group of students joined medical students across the country opening their envelopes at the same time.

Students were taking pictures, Skypeing, Facetiming and making phone calls to families and friends.

"Loma Linda University was my first choice, so I’m kind of out of words right now... I had a mini heart attack," Imran said. "It’s a bigger deal than graduation."

"YOU GET THE SENSE OF COMMUNITY"

Dr. John Molidor, community assistant dean and professor for MSU’s College of Human Medicine, said it is exciting to see students learn their placements. He stood at the front of the room with his phone and let the students know as soon as the time switched to noon.

"This is the culmination of four years of work," Molidor said. "I think it’s fantastic (to have it in the new building). You get the sense of celebration. You get the sense of community."

In past years, the students opened their letters at a restaurant or another public space, which makes it hard to celebrate, Imran said.

Lisa Vida had tears in her eyes when she learned her husband, Jon Vida, got his first choice for residency at Memorial Hospital in South Bend, Indiana.

"I am so proud of him. We are very happy," said Lisa Vida, who originally is from that state.

Jon Vida was able to open his letter in front of his wife and 10-month-old daughter, Harper, on Friday. He was excited about his Indiana placement.

"That’s exactly where I wanted to end up," he said. "It’s hard to think about working four years to open this one envelope."

"IT’S BEAUTIFUL"

The new campus made the day more special. The medical students have a space to call their own in downtown Flint.

"It gives a good study space and gives space for group study sessions," Jon Vida said. "I wish this space would have been around for my third-year rotation."

But, he said, he and his fellow fourth-year medical students now having挂着 rights for the first class to experience Match Day there.

Since the beginning of the year, third- and fourth-year medical students have used the new MSU College of Human Medicine Flint campus for lectures, test taking, studying and collaborating with other students.

"It’s great to have a real space. It’s like having a place to live. You actually feel like you belong in the community," said Dr. Aron Sousa, senior associate dean for academic affairs for the College of Human Medicine. "We’ve been in the community for more than 40 years, but we never had a front door. Both for the community and the university, it’s good to have a front door."

About 80 third-year and 50 fourth-year medical students use the space, along with six or seven regular faculty members, Sousa said.

The new MSU Flint campus, at the former Flint Journal building, was unveiled Nov. 14.

MSU’s College of Human Medicine announced plans in late 2011 to expand its medical education and public health programs in Flint with a $2.8 million grant from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

The expansion built on a partnership MSU has had in Flint for decades, with third- and fourth-year students doing clinical work in all three Genesee County hospitals — Hurley Medical Center, Genesys Regional Medical Center and McLaren Flint.

The new building is a major step up from the small space on the seventh floor at Hurley Medical Center students had used. Imran said. They would work at the hospital and sleep, eat and study there.

"You never left," she said, adding the new space is a great benefit to future students. "It’s beautiful. We’re not used to having a place this nice."

(Video)

Watch MSU medical students open residency match letters on Flint campus at bit.ly/MSUMatchDay.