



The
Doctor
is in

Physician's full plate serves
the needs of others

Dr. Zach Waterson '95 acknowledges it readily: He's a glutton.

Oh, not in the usual sense, understand. In the sense that, along with much else, his time at Manchester University taught him you can never get your fill of serving the needs of the wider world around you.

And so Waterson loads his plate these days without a twinge of conscience, or perhaps because his conscience directs him to. Start with the Fort Wayne Medical Education Program, of which Waterson is the CEO. Move on to the Family Medicine Residency Program, of which he is designated institutional official and program director. He's a national consultant for the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), and, last but hardly least, he's been in medical practice as a family physician since 1999.

If he's a glutton, it's not an epithet in his case. It's a badge of honor – one he wears proudly as an enduring imprint of Manchester's positive influence.

"The service part, being a family medicine physician ... primary care is not the glorious specialty," Waterson says. "But Manchester definitely shaped me in that sense of obligation to serve my community and really have a lot of roles."

And every one of his many roles helps fulfill that obligation.

The Medical Education Program, for instance, is a graduate medical organization that trains 36 residents at a time, 12 per year in the three-year program. The program affiliates with 32 medical schools that send

students for rotations in multiple specialties in Fort Wayne, and the program also operates the Family Medical Center, which serves largely underserved and marginalized populations.

"We're definitely a safety net in Fort Wayne and Allen County," Waterson says.

His consulting work with AAFP, meanwhile, involves trying to "help family medicine training programs all over the country be their best."

"I think that (compulsion to serve others) definitely was reinforced by the education I got at Manchester," Waterson says.

And how did he wind up at Manchester?

There was, he admits, a touch of serendipity to it. The son of a police officer and a nurse, he grew up in a family of Indiana University graduates, but he also grew up as something of a homebody. So he wanted to stay close to home – and he also wanted to go somewhere he wouldn't feel like a number, or get lost on a campus of 40,000 or 50,000 students.

Manchester, where a couple of high school friends were going, proved just the ticket.

"I had a couple of friends I had gone through elementary school, junior high school, high school with," says Waterson, who jokingly calls himself the "black sheep" of the family as the only one who didn't wind up at IU. "I knew one was going there for education to be a teacher, and she was a good friend of mine for years and years and years. So I looked into it.

"I liked the smaller nature, the size of the school. I knew for me my college undergrad

years were a stepping stone to a longer-term goal, and I just felt like I might not get there if I went to a big school. I felt I would get lost. You can do that when you're in a class with 400 people. It's very clear when you don't show up to class and there's 35 people, even in Biology 101. Your teachers, your profs know when you're not there. You don't get lost."

There were other advantages. Manchester's emphasis on a well-rounded liberal arts education enabled Waterson to explore history and political science and theology in addition to his medical studies ("That has been amazing," he says). The smaller professor-to-student ratios – virtually one-on-one in some cases – enabled him to establish valued personal relationships with his instructors that in some cases continue to this day. And the rigor of Manchester's curriculum thoroughly prepared him for the next step in his education.

"I really felt my first year of medical school was really a review of my last year at Manchester," Waterson recalls. "I took advantage of some really high-level classes, but you know there's a difference when you're sitting in a chemistry class of 15-20 students. And then my last year taking advanced chemistry with two of us in the class.

"I felt like more than just a student. I was not a student number. The professors knew your name. They knew about you personally. They would talk to you about short-term, long-term, life-term goals."

Goals that would lead to a fuller life.

And, in Waterson's case, a fuller plate.

By Benjamin Smith