



New Medical School

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Written by Community Impact Staff
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The first building on the new Texas A&M Health Science Center campus in Round Rock is expected to break ground in late summer or early fall.

The master plan was reviewed and the lease agreement was approved by the Board of Regents May 22. The master plan includes approximately 20 buildings situated on 25 to 50 acres at the corner of FM 1460 and CR 112. Classes are expected to be held in the first building starting in the fall of 2009, according to Health Science Center President Dr. Nancy Dickey.

The campus will feature a College of Medicine and probably other medical training courses, too, Dickey said.

"[The campus is] actually the whole breadth of what we offer. We'll look at being able to offer a piece of [each program] in Round Rock," she said. "We're hoping to have other HSC programs, including public health, part of pharmacy education, and with the severe nursing shortage — we'll have to talk to ACC and Texas State because I know they're both talking about nursing programs — but we do have a fast-track nursing program that takes people who already have a bachelor's degree and allows them to train as nurses." A rendering of the first building at the new Texas A&M Health Science Center in Round Rock

Although planning is still under way, the first building is anticipated to be four stories, 100,000 to 125,000 sq. ft., and feature educational and clinical space, Dickey said. Simulation laboratories will be equipped with sophisticated computerized mannequins for students to practice various medical procedures ranging from inserting IVs to delivering babies.

"It's also a chance to get teams together so medical students, nursing students and pharmacy students can literally practice the different things they bring to patient care before they find themselves standing at the foot of a patient, who may be listening to them as they learn how to be a team," Dickey said. "In our other simulation centers, we've actually had practicing doctors and operating teams, for example, come in and do some team training, as well. So, the simulation center becomes a laboratory available for our partner hospitals and our partner physicians."

The medical campus will initially be a coordinating center for the clinical rotations of third- and fourth-year students, who spend most of their time in hospitals and doctors' offices. However, the first building will have classrooms and small group rooms for the students and professors to use.

“There is still time for lectures and patient discussions and trying to correlate back to the first two years where they got so much basic science learning,” Dickey said. “Then, trying to make the connection to the clinical learning they’re doing now.”

Dickey said the medical facility will also have a clinic.

“We are anticipating partnering to have clinical space,” she said. “Some A&M faculty, but also potentially some community faculty who would provide clinical care, or clinics if you will, in this space. So, some of our students would be participating in the care of those patients.”

Building the program

Dr. Kathryn Kotrla was appointed associate dean for the Round Rock campus in September 2007. Kotrla said the school’s move to the area is attributed primarily to the support of the community. Dr. Kathryn Kotrla, Associate Dean, Texas A&M

“First, conceptually, it really is the vision of the community leadership and the Avery family, who have allowed this incredible opportunity and development for Central Texas,” Kotrla said of the Averys’ 15-acre land donation. “I just can’t emphasize enough that the community and our elected officials made this happen.”

Kotrla is focused on development of the new campus and the medical school program. She said that of course, you can’t have a medical school without teachers, but finding seasoned medical doctors who are willing to mentor students is just as important.

“This means identifying the physicians in the community who have the skills and aptitude for providing education,” Kotrla said. “And figuring out the logistics of delivering the same high quality education in Round Rock that our Texas A&M students have enjoyed for so many years.”

The involvement and commitment of local physicians is crucial to the success of the medical school, Kotrla said.

“I have been especially awed, frankly, that your physicians who provide care to all of us are so thoughtful about raising the next generation of physicians to continue to provide care even after they retire,” Kotrla said. “What we have seen are the very well-respected, leading physicians in the community step up to the plate and raise their hands and say, ‘I want to give back. I want to teach a young person how to be a physician.’”

The philosophy of caring for the whole person and family is something Kotrla wants students to learn.

“You have physicians here who have very personal practices,” she said. “They know their patients and they care about them. That is precisely the value system that the Texas A&M Health Science Center and the College of Medicine want all of our graduates to absorb — that of providing service and being contributing members of our community.” The first building at the new campus, labeled No. 1 above, is expected to be complete for classes in the fall of 2009.

HSC has been operating in 5,200 sq. ft. of leased space at the Old Towne Square office complex since January. The first medical student to complete a clinical rotation finished in May.

College leaders expect 16 to 20 students to begin rotations in Round Rock during the 2008-2009 academic year, with numbers increasing as the programs grow.

Matching students with physicians

The following physicians are serving as Texas A&M Health Science Center faculty by leading mentoring programs for students in the clinical rotation portion of the medical school program in Round Rock. Other doctors at these practices are also acting as mentors to the students.

Family Medicine

Dr. Joel Goode, Brushy Creek Family Physicians Psychiatry
Dr. Joanne Sotelo, Scott & White University Medical Campus Surgery
Dr. Rodney Lewis, Central Texas Surgical Associates Obstetrics and Gynecology Dr. Paul Murphree,
Oakwood Women's Centre Pediatrics
Dr. Larry Fane, Lone Star Circle of Care Internal Medicine
Dr. Louis Lux, Central Texas Hospitalists

For inquiries, contact Dr. Kathryn Kotrla at the Texas A&M Health Science Center at 388-6310.

Medical facility partnerships

Texas A&M Health Science Center is affiliated with the following medical facilities for students' clinical rotations:

Scott & White University Medical Campus
St. David's Medical Center
Round Rock Seton Medical Center Williamson
Lone Star Circle of Care

Courtesy of JB Goodwin