

NEWS RELEASE

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Rockford rural health center advances

Trustees approve finance plan, architect-engineer

CHICAGO—The University of Illinois Board of Trustees today advanced a major expansion of the National Center for Rural Health Professions in Rockford by approving a financial plan and hiring an architect-engineer for the project.

The Board's actions enable the University to move forward with the \$31 million, 58,000 square-foot addition that will include a 100-seat auditorium, administrative and student affairs offices, space for health systems research, a library, computer lab and an area for teaching clinical skills.

The addition will make facilities available to increase medical student enrollment and establish a new 200-student regional College of Pharmacy campus.

Sylvia Manning, chancellor of University of Illinois at Chicago, said the addition shows the University's commitment to the state of Illinois and its citizens.

"UIC already supplies Illinois with more health-care professionals than any other institution," Manning said. "This expansion of the Rockford facility will allow us to serve not only Northern Illinois but also citizens in rural areas throughout the state with caring practitioners and professionals who understand the specific health-care needs of rural areas.

"The increased research capability the addition brings to the Rockford Center also will benefit people and communities far beyond the borders of Illinois."

Institutional and federal government funds have been earmarked for the expansion of the Rockford center. The Board of Trustees' action provides a financing mechanism to ensure that funding gaps that remain between federal, state and private philanthropic support for the building will be carried through debt financing. The \$2.2 million in federal support was secured with the assistance of U.S. Rep. Don Manzullo.

“The Board’s action ensures that we can move forward with the project and not lose time or incur further costs,” Manning said.

Larson and Darby Inc. of Rockford will provide the architectural and engineering services for the addition. The firm’s fee for these services is \$1.48 million plus authorized reimbursable expenses estimated at \$120,000. Larson and Darby also served as the architect-engineer for the design phase of the project that began in November 2003.

The UIC College of Medicine began educating doctors at the Center for Rural Health Professions at the UIC College of Medicine at Rockford in 1993. In 2000, the program expanded and began educating nurses, dentists, pharmacists, mental-health social workers and public-health administrators to work in rural communities.

In 2003, the National Institutes of Health made a \$6.4 million grant to the program to reduce health-care disparities in rural areas, and the Board of Trustees voted to designate the center as the National Center for Rural Health Professions.

The NIH grant and national center designation expanded the effort to train doctors and other health professionals in Illinois to take an interdisciplinary approach to address the unique issues surrounding rural health care throughout Illinois.

In addition to training health-care professionals, the National Center for Rural Health Professions at Rockford conducts wide-ranging research on rural medical and health-care issues, develops health-care policy, serves as an advocate for better rural health care and introduces young people (K-12, high school and college undergraduates and graduate students) to careers in health care.

The Rockford center also provides community outreach in 14 northwest Illinois counties (LaSalle, DeKalb, Boone, Winnebago, Ogle, Stephenson, Lee, Bureau, Putnam, Henry, Whiteside, Carroll, Jo Daviess and Rock Island).

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The University of Illinois enrolls 70,000 undergraduate and graduate students at campuses in Urbana-Champaign, Chicago, Springfield and online, and it awards 17,000 degrees annually.

The agenda and items for the July meeting are available on the Board of Trustees Website at

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