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AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

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507 East Green Street, Room 345
Champaign, IL 61820



NEWS

Released 3/12/15

U. of I., Carle moving forward with the first engineering-based college of medicine

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CHAMPAIGN, Ill. — Partners in a first-of-its-kind medical college on the University of Illinois's Urbana-Champaign campus are advancing to the next phase of development, having completed a key administrative step today.

The University of Illinois Board of Trustees voted unanimously Thursday to establish the nation's first college of medicine focused, from the beginning, on the intersection of engineering and medicine. This will be the first new college created at Urbana in 60 years.

The college will be a partnership between the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Carle Health System that is specifically designed to train a new kind of doctor. This ground-breaking approach will integrate the university's unparalleled assets in engineering, technology and supercomputing with Carle's nationally recognized, comprehensive health care system.

More information about the college is available at www.medicine.illinois.edu.

“Today, we have been given the opportunity to change the world,” Chancellor Phyllis M. Wise said after the board’s vote. “We are the first to chart this new path in medical education, and we are excited by the challenge. Being first and being best is a 150-year tradition at Illinois, and we fully intend to translate that experience into advances in health care delivery.”

The U. of I.’s College of Engineering offers 15 undergraduate and graduate degree programs ranked in the top five, nationally and internationally.

“Together we will transform not only how doctors are trained, but how they solve problems and care for patients. With physicians, engineers and other scientists collaborating at every level, faculty and students will think and work differently,” said James C. Leonard, M.D., president and chief executive officer, Carle Health System. “The difference will be felt not only by the future patients of these physicians, but also by the countless others who will benefit from their medical discoveries.”

Building upon recommendations in a 2014 economic development study, Illinois faculty and staff members from across campus have been working with Carle physicians and staff to develop business, governance and financing plans for the new engineering-based college of medicine. Urbana-Champaign faculty leaders, the Academic Senate, and all campus deans have been involved in the evaluation process.

“The discussion has made the plan better,” Wise said. “Medicine is so multifaceted. Our expertise in technology, science and engineering is so extensive. Broad, open conversation is the only way to deliver on the full promise of this idea. It will allow us to create a college of medicine like no other and will become a transformational driver on our innovation ecosystem.”

The college will be funded through a combination of revenue from new inventions, medical student tuition, corporate investments and private philanthropy. Funds for operations will not be shifted from other from colleges or departments, nor will there be any requests for new appropriations from the state.

Carle Health System, the clinical partner in the college, is a nationally recognized leader in high-quality, cost-effective and coordinated patient care. Carle is also the primary investor in the new initiative – with a pledge of \$100 million in the first 10 years, including \$34.5 million for startup costs.

The new college will be bound by the University Statutes and overseen by the U. of I. Board of Trustees, with the dean also serving as chief academic officer at Carle Health System and reporting to both the Urbana provost and Carle's Chief Medical Officer. A joint liaison committee would be formed to serve in an advisory capacity.

Ilesanmi Adesida, the provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs, said the college of medicine will impact not only engineering and medicine, it also will lead to broad collaborations that will benefit all three U. of I. campuses, Illinois residents, and health care consumers as a whole.

"This idea is something that's been percolating on this campus for the last 50 years," he said. "Our goal and our heritage are to be the pre-eminent public research university with a land-grant mission and global impact. This is an example of our delivering on that challenge."

Efforts will now focus on recruiting a founding dean, securing financial support from donors and investors, and preparing a submission to the Illinois Board of Higher Education and the Liaison Committee for Medical Education for accreditation as a new college of medicine.