

## University plans to attract doctors with new school

From Wire Reports

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MIAMI -- Florida International University presented plans Thursday for a medical school on its campus, saying the facility is necessary to help alleviate a shortage of physicians.

FIU President Modesto Maidique said a formal proposal has been presented to the Board of Governors, who must approve what could become the state's fourth public medical school. The plan also needs legislative approval.

FIU officials cited statistics that reflect a dearth of doctors nationwide, and said the planned school could alleviate the problem in Florida. About 85 percent of all FIU graduates remain in Florida after finishing their degree, and 80 percent remain in South Florida.

The University of Central Florida has similar ambitions.

UCF officials recently hired MGT of America to study the viability of bringing a medical school to Orlando.

UCF inked the \$270,000, six-month contract for the study with the same Tallahassee firm that Florida State University hired to prove that school should open its own medical school -- which lawmakers later created in 2000.

MGT will interview community and medical leaders in Orlando this summer, as well as assess UCF's academic assets. Its report should arrive near the end of the year.

Florida ranks 45th in the nation in number of medical residents, or physicians in training. The state's 17 medical residents per 100,000 people is well below the national average of 37 residents per 100,000 people.

The Graduate Medical Education Committee has estimated Florida needs an additional 2,000 residency positions during the next five years to approach the national average. The state is 2,500 residency slots short of keeping up with the state's current population, a report by the medical education committee said.

Critics say that opening another medical school is the most expensive option to build Florida's doctor base, and efforts should instead focus on keeping medical graduates in the state for their residency programs.

*David Damron of the Sentinel staff contributed to this report.*