

FIU's planned medical school gets \$10 million pledge

By Eppie Vega
Miami Bureau

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Florida International University's plan to open a medical school by 2007 received a boost on Thursday with a proposed \$10 million donation.

FIU president Modesto "Mitch" Maidique announced the offer by longtime supporter and FIU Trustee Herbert Wertheim, who challenged the community to raise another \$10 million.

"This is a signal day, a milestone in the history of our university," Maidique said.



New medical school

Florida International University President Modesto Maidique presented plans Thursday, in Miami, for a medical school on FIU's campus.

(AP/Wilfredo Lee)

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The school will get the money after the state university system's Board of Governors in Tallahassee approves FIU's proposal for a School of Medicine. The contribution is also contingent on other donors matching Wertheim's gift. If that happens, the \$20 million will be eligible for a state grant that would match that amount, bringing the total to \$40 million.

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FIU's proposed medical school would use local hospitals such as Baptist Health, Mercy Hospital, Miami Children's Hospital and Mount Sinai Medical Center for its students. Miami Children's Hospital and Mount Sinai already have teaching programs.

Medical graduates could then continue their training at any of the hospitals.

"Each one would have a number of residency programs affiliated with FIU," Maidique said. "It would be depending on their strengths."

The university estimates it will need about \$20 million in start-up costs over two years. Construction costs would be \$40 million. State funds, clinical fees, private funds and student tuition will be used for the expenses.

FIU officials say a medical school would address an expected drought of doctors in the next few decades.

Provost Mark Rosenberg said recent studies suggest there will be a national shortage of 80,000 to 90,000 doctors by 2020. He said 42 percent of the state's doctors are 55 or older, a quarter of those are 65 or older, and Florida currently imports 80 percent of its new doctors.

"This is going to become worse in the next few years," Rosenberg said. "In Dade County, we receive nearly 1,000 new people. We receive 600 to 700 migrants a day in Florida."

The proposed medical school would attract a culturally diverse pool of students who likely would practice in South Florida, FIU administrators said. More than 80 percent of FIU's graduates remain in the area.

"We should play a significant role in helping to address the health care needs of our community," Rosenberg said.

FIU is one of two South Florida public universities making plans for a medical school. Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton will have a medical program beginning in August.

Carlos Martini, FIU's medical school project director, said a public medical school will open doors for many students.

"We're going to charge the cheapest tuition in Florida's public medical schools," Martini said. "It will be one-third of what you would pay in a private university."

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