

University of Nevada School of Medicine

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**University of Nevada School of Medicine proposes
new health sciences center concept to Board of Regents**

Plan calls for major increases in size and scope of health education programs

Reno, Nev.—The fastest growing state in the nation faces major challenges in providing adequate health care for its citizens unless the state’s public medical school and other health education programs expand their class sizes and facilities, according to a presentation made Friday to the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) Board of Regents.

This finding is the result of a report commissioned by Chancellor James E. Rogers to address the state’s concerns about the shortage of health care providers. Acknowledging the pivotal role of Nevada’s public institutions of higher learning in addressing this shortage, Rogers charged the leadership of the University of Nevada, Reno, the University of Nevada School of Medicine and the University of Nevada Las Vegas to convene a task force to study the issue and make recommendations.

“Nevadans face an appalling shortage of doctors, nurses and other health care professionals,” said Rogers noting the state ranks 47th in the nation in physicians per 100,000 people and near the bottom in nurses per 100,000 people. “As chancellor, it is my highest priority to address this concern and we can only do so by fostering a spirit of partnership between the two universities. We must work together to attend to the health care needs of Nevada.”

LarsonAllen, a Minnesota-based consulting firm hired by the task force to review and make recommendations concerning the role of Nevada’s universities and medical school in health care education, met with more than 70 stakeholders across the state and reviewed data from a variety of sources.

“Our firm has worked with medical schools and health sciences centers across the nation,” said LarsonAllen Principal, Greg Hart. “We’ve found that Nevada’s medical school is high-quality in terms of its existing educational programs and the research of the faculty. The problem is that the school is too small in size and scope to meet the state’s growing health care needs.”

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To improve access to care for Nevada's growing and aging population, Larson Allen recommended the School of Medicine and the state's other health professional education programs grow significantly and work together to form a health sciences center.

The formation of a health sciences center would enable the integration of high caliber health education, research, patient care and community health improvement within a university-based setting, featuring:

- A medical school aligned with other NSHE health professional schools (Nursing, Public Health, Pharmacy, Dentistry, etc.);
- Aligned teaching hospitals deeply committed to the success of the medical school's faculty, students and mission;
- Commitment of the education, outreach, patient care and research efforts of the center to the benefit of all Nevadans.

The formation of a health sciences center would augment the existing medical school and other health education programs and not result in any shift of these organizations from their historic institutional roots.

Over the course of a decade, planning calls for an increase in annual state operating budget for the School of Medicine from the current \$27M to \$53M in current dollars. Thus far, financial planning has only focused on the needs of expanding the School of Medicine in order to respond to the state's health care crisis. In that time, this increase in support will allow the School of Medicine to:

- Increase the medical school class size from 52 to 96 by 2011;
- Increase the full time statewide faculty from 189 to 500;
- Increase the number of total post-MD resident and fellowship positions from 194 to 444, using projected state needs for specific physician providers to tailor health education training programs.

Capital needs to support the growth of the School of Medicine are estimated at about \$300M-350M in current dollars. This funding would be derived from both public and private revenue sources and also be phased in over 10 years.

There will be additional operating and capital needs to support the growth of the other health professional schools, which the LarsonAllen study has emphasized as essential. These needs have yet to be quantified; a task that will be completed in the coming months.

The LarsonAllen study concludes that Nevada's population would benefit from the expanded NSHE health education programs by:

- Improved access to health care with 800 to 1,000 new physicians, 1,600 to 2,400 bachelor's degree-prepared nurses, and 600 to 700 new pharmacists entering Nevada's health professional workforce over the course of the next 10 to 15 years. These numbers are more than double the programs current contributions to the state's workforce;

- Improved community health with focused research, education and service programs directed at the state's most pressing public health issues;
- Enhanced access to research-driven, evidence-based care and disease prevention;
- Increased economic development with a projected \$40M-45M in annual sponsored research coming into the state due to increased biomedical research capabilities and expanded facilities.

Dr. John A. McDonald, dean of the University of Nevada School of Medicine and vice president for health sciences, said he and other members of the task force have asked the Board of Regents to support the plan outlined by LarsonAllen.

“As the state's only public medical school we have a responsibility to address the health care needs of Nevadans,” said McDonald. “We will be working with the Board of Regents to provide them with additional information and more specific recommendations in the months ahead. It is important that we move ahead aggressively, as I am deeply concerned that without expanding the mission of the medical school and other health education programs, Nevada's health status will continue to deteriorate.”

Should the Board of Regents approve recommendations for continued planning, the task force will develop more specific proposals for the Board's further consideration.

For further information, please visit www.unr.edu/med.

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