

Medical center's ground broken

IPFW school grows to 4-year program

By Michael Schroeder

The Journal Gazette

Work is well under way on a new medical education building that will house an expanded medical school program, but about 100 people gathered Tuesday to make it official during a ceremonial groundbreaking.

When completed, the \$12 million, 41,000-square-foot-plus building will allow Indiana University School of Medicine-Fort Wayne to admit more first- and second-year medical students. The center on Indiana University Purdue University-Fort Wayne's campus will also accommodate third- and fourth-year students for the first time.

The building – which will include state-of-the-art lecture halls and laboratories – is expected to be completed in late fall 2008 and occupied in 2009. It will house advanced technology that can also be used for faculty research and to support community health organizations and functions.

Dr. Fen-Lei Chang, director of Indiana University School of Medicine-Fort Wayne, anticipates that the program will see additional students beginning in 2009.

Currently, there's space for 16 students per year in the local program. "We'd really like to double it," Fen-Lei said. He hopes to accomplish that by 2010. That's the same year he hopes to see the program expanded to four years.

The eight regional IU medical school campuses have first- and second-year students. All IU medical students now spend their final two years of clinical training in Indianapolis. But with Indiana cruising toward a doctor shortage, IU medical school is increasing its enrollment and looking to regional campuses to help meet future need, said Dr. D. Craig Brater, dean of the IU medical school.

A task force formed by the IU School of Medicine recommended in December that the school boost its medical student enrollment by 30 percent over the next two decades. As demand for medical services increases across the country – owing in part to the aging population – the task force found that the state may already have a physician shortage, especially among poorer populations.

Brater said the original intent of regional programs was to draw doctors back to areas around Indiana to practice medicine. He said the approach has worked and that same logic is at the heart of efforts to expand regional programs to four years.

The state of Indiana appropriated the \$12 million to Indiana University for the new medical building on IPFW's campus. Several state legislators were on hand at the ceremonial groundbreaking and they were praised for their efforts to get funds for the project.



Janelle Sou Roberts | The Journal Gazette

Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne held a ceremonial groundbreaking Tuesday for its new medical education building, even though construction is already in progress.