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Medical building lauded for 'vision' Ground is broken on new facility at IPFW.

By Jennifer L. Boen

Indiana University President Michael McRobbie, on the job for a little more than three months, made his fifth trip to Fort Wayne on Tuesday for the groundbreaking of the IU School of Medicine-Fort Wayne's new building.

The 41,000-square-foot, two-story classroom/research facility on the campus of Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne offers a "clear vision" of what's possible when universities, students, elected officials and community members work together, McRobbie said.

For Barth Raggatz, who was director of the Fort Wayne medical school for 15 years, the day marked the culmination of a dream: giving the school's students — currently 16 first-year and 16 second-year — the chance to complete four years of training in Fort Wayne. The med school is one of several "spokes" to the main campus in Indianapolis.

"We didn't envision initially adding the third and fourth years," he said. But Raggatz soon saw the value in expansion — supplying more doctors to northeast Indiana. By fall 2009, the expansion will allow room for 32 students to be accepted each year.

During the 2003 General Assembly, Raggatz and several legislators from both parties met in Indianapolis to take a dream and make it reality.

"You sold me on the 'hub-and-spoke theory' a long time ago," Rep. Randy Borrer, R-Fort Wayne, told Raggatz. "I remember the napkin that was used when \$14 million was put on there" — the amount Raggatz said was needed for the project. "We would not be standing here today if it were not for your pushing the Legislature," Borrer said.

Sen. Bob Meeks, R-LaGrange, recalled attaching the \$14 million to another bill for funding IU programs.

"Somebody said, 'Who put this in there?' I said, 'I did.' ... We all got together and worked together," Meeks said.

First-year student Meaghan Kuczora of Marion said the opportunity to finish medical school in Fort Wayne excites her. "I think it will be great to not have to go to Indianapolis. I really like it here."

The new building is expected to be ready by late 2008. Space for the med school in the existing Classroom Medical Building is limited to the third floor, and Kuczora said, "It will be nice not to have to be limited to one floor."

Dr. David Bell, who teaches physiology and is involved in cardiac and stroke research, said expanded laboratory facilities will enable faculty and students to work collaboratively on projects, which is key to garnering research funding.

The new building will be adjacent to the just-completed Rhinehart Music Building.

"I just hope Chancellor (Michael) Wartell doesn't run out of ground," Meeks said. "I keep asking him if he has space. He keeps saying yes."
