Jefferson Launches Urban Campus Transformation with a Lead Gift from Dorrance H. Hamilton

Jefferson’s new educational facility, with its associated campus green, will be the “new heart of the campus,” setting the standard for Jefferson’s educational vision and for its interaction with the surrounding community, says Thomas Jefferson University President Robert L. Barchi, M.D., Ph.D.

In a project that will literally transform its campus, Thomas Jefferson University, Philadelphia, will construct a campus green, medical education building and underground parking structure, with the help of a $25 million donation from Dorrance H. “Dodo” Hamilton. “The complex will be a major addition to the redevelopment of this critical area of Center City Philadelphia, announced Thomas Jefferson University President Robert L. Barchi, M.D., Ph.D.

Changing the look of the campus, the $60 million complex, which includes an expansive grassy plaza, will become the new focal point of the campus. The college green will provide a much-needed open space in which students and faculty can informally interact with each other and with the surrounding community, said Dr. Barchi. “It will help us create an academic sense of community we’ve really never had before.”

The new education building, along with ongoing renovations in other campus buildings surrounding the new green, will be the focus for all educational activities on the campus, creating a well-defined academic precinct on the southern half of Jefferson’s 14-acre campus.
The new heart of the campus will include a 60,000 square-foot plaza, a 129,000 square-foot medical education building and a 215-space underground garage, replacing a parking garage and concrete square on the north side of Locust Street between 10th and 11th streets. Groundbreaking will take place this fall, with completion anticipated in two years.

The six-story, state-of-the-art academic building will house a technologically-advanced auditorium, small and large group classrooms and a two-floor clinical skills center featuring virtual diagnostic and surgical suites. The building was designed by the architectural firm Burt Hill Kosar Rittelmann Associates of Philadelphia. Landscape design is by the Philadelphia firm of Andropogon Associates.

With an entrance facing onto a grassy plaza where students and faculty can meet and interact informally, the building will also feature common meeting areas on each floor and a rooftop terrace and lounge for special events.

The facility’s curved façade features large expanses of glass that will open onto the plaza to highlight the “new heart of the campus,” Dr. Barchi said. This transparency is one of the building’s most important features and carries through the entire ground floor, allowing people on the street to look into the lobby, through the building and out to the plaza.

“The building’s openness will display activities within and help establish a connection with the community that surrounds us,” the university president noted.

“With the generous donation of $25 million from Mrs. Hamilton, a member of Jefferson’s Board of Trustees, the Dorrance H. Hamilton Building will provide an interdisciplinary learning environment for medical, nursing, physical therapy and occupational therapy students with the most sophisticated educational tools in clinical care,” said Thomas J. Nasca, M.D., dean, Jefferson Medical College, and senior vice president, Thomas Jefferson University. “At Jefferson, students will view themselves not as future individual practitioners but as members of multidisciplinary teams, working together in the best interest of the patient.”

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This will allow the institution to “define the future of clinical care” where medical, nursing and other health profession students learn to work together as multidisciplinary teams and to educate more health care professional students as well as medical students, the university president said.

Mrs. Hamilton’s contribution is the largest donation ever made to Jefferson.

“Dodo Hamilton has shown exceptional philanthropic leadership and service to Jefferson,” Dr. Barchi noted.

Among her many achievements, Mrs. Hamilton served as chair of Jefferson's capital campaign, the Jefferson 2000 Fund. To aid the campaign, Mrs. Hamilton presented Jefferson with a $5 million gift to the Department of Medicine to support laboratory renovations and two professorships.

In 1998, through a charitable income trust, Mrs. Hamilton committed $2.2 million to expand key medical oncology and surgical programs at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital. In 1997, she contributed $3 million to Thomas Jefferson University in honor of three Jefferson physicians who cared for her late husband. That gift established a professorship in medicine and supported medical research in cancer, pulmonary medicine and digestive diseases, as well as education initiatives in Jefferson’s Department of Medicine.

Mrs. Hamilton has been a member of Thomas Jefferson University's Board of Trustees since 1972 and a member of the Women's Board of Thomas Jefferson University Hospital since 1957.

“This gift will help Jefferson assure that there will be an increased number of skilled physicians, nurses and other health professionals to provide better access to care for the people of this region and the nation,” Mrs. Hamilton said.

"Through Mrs. Hamilton’s foresight and generosity, Jefferson will enhance the education of our students, assure our role as a leader in clinical education and fulfill Jefferson’s goal of shaping the future of clinical care,” Dr. Barchi said.
Within the new Dorrance H. Hamilton Building, the Dr. Robert and Dorothy Rector Clinical Skills Center will be the focus for innovative medical education, Dr. Barchi said. The center will be a vast expansion of Jefferson’s current clinical skills center with the aid of a $10 million bequest from the estate of Jefferson Medical College alumnus the late Dr. Robert (Class of 1948) and Dorothy Rector of Chambersburg, Pa.

An additional gift of $1 million from the Arcadia Foundation of Norristown, Pa., headed by Marilyn Steinbright, president, is also devoted to the education facility.

“The future of clinical care will include a unified team approach to patients and our new clinical skills center will educate medical, nursing and other health profession students in the team-based health care delivery model of tomorrow while they are still in the formative training years today,” Dr. Barchi said.

The existing Clinical Skills Center features clinical training areas, classroom space, and an audio-video studio for taping student interactions. This facility has a variety of computerized simulators and medical equipment that enable students to become proficient in a wide range of clinical situations. The simulators include intubation mannequins, joint injection models, IV and intradermal simulators, pelvic exam and birthing simulators.

Jefferson will also increase class size at the medical school to 255, up from the current 228, with the approval of the Association of American Medical Colleges, starting with the first-year class entering in August, and expand educational programs in related health professions areas, such as nursing, occupational therapy and physical therapy, to address an impending U.S. health professional shortage, the university president said.

Even before ground breaks on the new facility, Jefferson has already begun its expansion and campus renewal plans. McClellan Hall in the Jefferson Medical College building is being converted from a flat auditorium into a tiered 275-seat, high-tech lecture theater that will accommodate the larger medical school class arriving in August. The renovations are being funded by a gift from the Foerderer Foundation.
The expansion of the medical school’s class size, starting with the first-year class entering in August, will make Jefferson Medical College the largest private medical school in the nation. The medical school has one of the largest living alumni groups in the country, with a long tradition of providing outstanding compassionate clinicians, Dr. Barchi noted.

Jefferson is taking these steps to help offset an anticipated shortage in the United States of possibly as many as 200,000 physicians by 2020 and to answer a call to medical schools throughout the nation to boost their enrollment over the next decade by 15 percent, said Dr. Barchi.

The Association of American Medical Colleges has said medical schools need to start planning now to prevent the shortages that at least two studies have predicted.

According to AAMC President Jordan J. Cohen, M.D., given the extended time it takes to educate and train tomorrow's doctors, efforts to increase enrollment must get underway as soon as possible to assure that the health care needs of the nation in 2015 and beyond are met.

Thomas Jefferson University is composed of three schools--Jefferson Medical College, the Jefferson College of Graduate Studies and the Jefferson College of Health Professions. The three colleges enroll more than 2,300 future physicians, scientists and health-care professionals.

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Editor’s Note: Mrs. Hamilton resides in Wayne, Pa.
Dr. Barchi resides in Narberth, Pa.