

Health Science Center arrival hailed

By LAURI ZACHRY
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Construction on the Texas A&M Health Science Center location in Round Rock began in September but A&M and Round Rock community officials hosted a dedication ceremony Thursday.

The first building of the health science center is expected to be occupied by Nov. 10, 2009.

"Our nation and our state currently face an unprecedented health care work force shortage with statistics showing Texas in need of 10,000 additional practicing physicians by 2020 simply to maintain our current physician-to-patient ratio," said Dr. Nancy W. Dickey, president of the Texas A&M Health Science Center and vice chancellor for health affairs for the A&M System.

The new 130,000-square-foot, four-story facility will include classrooms and a simulation lab to



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Apache helicopters from Fort Hood land Thursday near the construction site of the proposed Texas A&M Health Science Center. Officials hosted a dedication ceremony at the site west of FM 1460.

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tain doctors, nurses and medical students.

The Avery family of Round Rock, which has planned the Avery Town Centre development on University Boulevard near the health science center, donated 15 acres of land for the health science center located west of FM 1460 and south of County Road 12 in Round Rock while A&M Health Science Center officials purchased an additional 25 acres, which was recently accepted.

Currently, there are approximately 35 third- and fourth-year medical students completing six- to two-week rotations in Round Rock through the A&M Health Science Center, Dickey said. These students began their classes this summer and have completed rotations at St. David's Round Rock Medical Center, Seton

Medical Center Williamson, Scott & White and Lone Star Circle of Care. Over the next two years, the entire Texas A&M Health Science Center System plans to have at least 200 freshman level medical students enrolled in programs, Dickey said.

"We're proud to say we have become the fastest growing medical school in the country," Dickey said. "We have brought medical education to what is considered a medically underserved area because of the growth in population in Williamson County."

Lone Star Circle of Care, a federally qualified Community Health Center will operate a clinic for Williamson County uninsured and underinsured residents in approximately 33,000 square feet of the health science center.

Along with its state-of-the-art facilities, the Texas A&M Health Science Center in Round Rock will focus heavily on diabetic care and research, said dean of the College of Medicine for

the Texas A&M Health Science Center Dr. Christopher Colenda. A&M recently recruited Dr. Divian Fonseca, currently a professor of medicine at Tulane University, to the staff, Colenda said. He will begin parttime with A&M Jan. 1 and fulltime by summer 2009.

"Dr. Fonseca will be great at educating our students and will be a resource to doctors and patients in the community," Colenda said.

The 80th Texas Legislature appropriated \$9 million in 2007 for a health science center in Round Rock to provide medical education. State Rep. Dan Gattis (R-Georgetown), who supported the funding of the health science center during the last legislative session, said the role of government is to be responsible for two assets - hard assets and soft assets.

Gattis said hard assets include such aspects as transportation and energy and wastewater issues. Soft assets include education,



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Architect Tommy Cowan presents a brand to Texas A&M officials, including Dr. Mark McKinney, chancellor of the Texas A&M University and Dr. Nancy Dickey, head of the Texas A&M Health Science Center (seated left and right) Thursday.

health care and public safety.

He said the A&M Health Science Center is an example of focusing on two soft asset areas - health care and education.

"This sets us up for future successes for our children and our grandchildren," Gattis said. "We shouldn't just be responsible in these

areas but we should be excellent and excelling in these areas."

The A&M Health Science Center already occupies 5,000 square feet at the Old Town Square office complex in Round Rock near Sam Bass Road for administrative offices and student support. Affiliation agreements have also been

signed with Lone Star Circle of Care, St. David's HealthCare, Seton Family of Hospitals, Scott & White University Medical Center and the Texas Life-Sciences Collaboration Center in Georgetown.

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