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\$165M expansion set for Morehouse med school

Premium content from Atlanta Business Chronicle - by Urvaksh Karkaria , Staff Writer

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Morehouse School of Medicine plans to invest \$165 million in a campus expansion aimed at boosting Georgia's physician supply and bolstering the downtown institution's research reputation.

The decade-long investment, which will include at least 200,000 square feet of new construction, is expected to more than double annual student enrollment to 200, by 2020.

Morehouse School of Medicine (MSM), founded in 1975, is the first medical school established at a historically black college and university in the 20th century. Morehouse is located in the working-class West End area, south of downtown Atlanta.

The need for physicians is going to be even greater when health-care reform takes full effect and more people have access to care in 2014, MSM President Dr. **John Maupin** Jr. said, referring to the more than 30 million uninsured Americans who will be added to the insured rolls.

"We want to be prepared ... to train the next generation of doctors," Maupin said.

The proposed expansion, Morehouse's largest in about a decade, will add to metro Atlanta's medical and biotech research infrastructure, such as **Emory University**, Georgia Tech and the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**.

The project will also alter the real estate landscape of a gritty urban Atlanta neighborhood.

Morehouse's plans call for the construction of two 100,000-square-foot multi-story academic centers, in addition to expansion and renovation of existing buildings, MSM Chief Planning Officer **Andrea Fox** said. The blueprint also includes a 7-acre outpatient medical campus that could host a neuro-regenerative research facility and a rehabilitation hospital. Morehouse would joint-venture on the campus with undisclosed medical institutions.

"This [outpatient] campus will complement our growing strength in stroke and neuroscience research," Maupin said.

The Morehouse expansion will help revitalize the real estate market in an economically depressed

part of Atlanta, said **Dean McNaughton**, senior director at **Cushman & Wakefield of Georgia Inc.**

The additional jobs and foot traffic that a larger Morehouse campus would generate, could drive more construction in the area, including retail, office and apartment buildings, McNaughton said.

As Morehouse plots its growth, another Georgia health-care institution has its sights on Atlanta, too.

Georgia Health Sciences University (formerly Medical College of Georgia) — which includes the nation's sixth-largest medical school — is mapping plans to establish an Atlanta campus, where it would do medical research, operate health-care training centers and, longer term, deliver clinical care.

Jobs and research

A shortage of more than 1,500 physicians in Georgia's underserved areas can be expected by 2020, according to a 2008 report commissioned by GHSU on behalf of the University System of Georgia Board of Regents.

With its expansion, financed with public and private dollars (including \$10 million in federal stimulus money), Morehouse plans to nearly double its M.D. program to accommodate about 100 new students annually.

The school wants to double class size in its master's and Ph.D. programs in Biomedical Sciences, too.

"The growing economy of this state is around bioscience and biotechnology," Maupin said. "We want to meet the workforce demands of the future of this state."

Morehouse also wants to beef up its research capabilities, with a focus on neuroscience (stroke), infectious disease (HIV/AIDS), cardio-metabolic disease (hypertension and diabetes) and cancer research.

These conditions affect large segments of the population, particularly minorities, and are expensive to treat, Maupin said.

"We're not in a small-risk, small medical school," he said. "We have to really target our resources to areas that we believe have the greatest potential."

They are also areas in which Morehouse has significant research capabilities and offer the potential for partnerships with area academic institutions, including **Grady Memorial Hospital**, Emory and Georgia Tech.

A growing Morehouse is likely to have a positive ripple effect on the 953-bed Grady in downtown Atlanta.

Morehouse provides doctors to the safety-net hospital, specifically in primary care area, Grady's chief medical officer, Dr. **Curtis Lewis**, said.

As Morehouse grows its research, it is likely to lure clinical trials, many of which will be done at

Grady, Lewis said.

The expansion of Morehouse's research capabilities will grow Atlanta's biomedical enterprise, said **Mike Cassidy**, president of the Georgia Research Alliance.

"Investment in biomedical infrastructure is going to mean new business opportunity in the region," Cassidy said, referring to the creation of local startups.

A robust research network also makes Atlanta attractive to biotech companies scouting for expansion and relocation sites.

"It's those [educational] relationships that industry is seeking," Cassidy said.

Morehouse is not alone in bulking up its research capabilities. Last month, construction began on a \$90 million Health Sciences Research Building on the Emory University campus. The center, which is scheduled for completion in April 2013, will also work with Georgia Tech and Morehouse School of Medicine.

Doing research means little unless those discoveries can translate into drugs and procedures that save and improve lives.

To help do that, Morehouse School of Medicine plans to commercialize its intellectual property, which is valued at more than \$500 million. Morehouse seeks to raise \$100 million in various phases to nurture early-stage technologies, developed at Morehouse and other institutions, that address unmet medical needs.

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