

FSU right to pause on primary care clinic

Henry Lewis III, My View 7:38 p.m. EDT August 5, 2016



I read with much interest and dismay about the proposed location of the Florida State University College of Medicine primary care clinic across the street from the Renaissance Center in Frenchtown.

As one of the individuals who worked at the outset with the development of the Neighborhood Health Center as a “free clinic” over 40 years ago with Dr. David White, a physician from FSU at the time, I lend my voice of concern.

The Florida A&M University then School of Pharmacy provided the dispensing of medications to patients who received treatment at the clinic. I was one the first pharmacist working with the free clinic.

Neighborhood Health Center has grown in scope, number of locations and breadth of services offered into one of the two most important health care safety net health centers in Tallahassee. A safety net center is one who provides care for uninsured, under insured and indigent populations.

Bond Community Health Center, the second, evolved out of the vision of Dr. C.E. Richardson, Dr. Ed Holified, Dr. Alfreda Blackshear and others who saw the critical need for primary care services to low income patients, particularly on the south side of Tallahassee. Again FAMU School of Pharmacy provided the pharmacy services at the center’s initial location at the Smith Williams Services Center.

Bond grew and moved its location to Orange Avenue in its own facilities and a satellite operation in the County Health Department Building.

Both Bond and Neighborhood have become “Federally Qualified Community Health Centers” bringing into this community millions of federal dollars and providing primary health care to the community’s most vulnerable and medically needed populations. Both centers have created hundreds of jobs for health care personnel, staffed by board certified physicians, nurses and nurse practitioners and pharmacists.

As a former member of the Leon County Health Care Advisory Council, I consistently supported the county’s financial support of both facilities. The provision of these services by both centers has significantly decreased the need for expensive treatment provided at the emergency rooms of both Tallahassee Memorial Health Care and Capital Regional Medical Center.

I fully realize that an emerging College of Medicine, particularly one located in an area where there is no academic hospital, needs an outlet to provide both primary health training and health services for its medical students. I further understand that FSU will probably need to move forward at some time with a new location.

What FSU must do is to find a location that will not adversely impact the operations of either Bond or Neighborhood. FSU must further endeavor not to decrease the funding that either of the centers receive from the county, city or the federal government – certainly not competing as a federally qualified community health center.

FSU should implement its primary care operations as a supplement to the two established primary care providers who have provided over eight decades of services to this community.

Dr. Henry Lewis III is the former Dean of the FAMU College of Pharmacy and a former County Commissioner.

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