

PRESS RELEASE

January 25, 2006

FSU Signs Letter of Intent to Establish Immokalee Health Center

CONTACT:

Doug Carlson

(850) 645-1255; Doug.Carlson@med.fsu.edu

By Jill Elish

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. - NCH Healthcare System will help Florida State University's College of Medicine establish a training program focusing on rural health in Immokalee, Fla., an area that is home to many poor farm and migrant workers.

FSU President T.K. Wetherell and NCH Chief Executive Officer Edward A. Morton signed a letter of intent in which the NCH Healthcare System will donate the 28,000-square-foot Isabel Collier Read Building, its underlying land and adjacent parking areas to the FSU Foundation to house the new program. The program will offer primary health care services to the community and provide educational experiences to FSU medical students.

"We are most appreciative of this gift," Wetherell said. "This will give FSU the opportunity to provide some needed services to an underserved area, while at the same time giving our students tremendous experience. It's a win-win situation for the community and the university."

Morton agreed.

"Such a program will provide an excellent educational opportunity for students, while at the same time providing an additional avenue for the Immokalee community to access healthcare services closer to home," he said. "We welcome the opportunity to participate with FSU in this cause. We believe that NCH's involvement will provide a unique opportunity for medical education in this diverse county."

The program, which is designed with the expectation of state funding to operate the center, has the support of the Collier County area legislative delegation. FSU will ask the Florida Legislature for \$2.2 million in recurring funds to operate the center and a one-time allocation of \$5 million to renovate the facility. Wetherell will meet with the delegation to finalize the budget request for the project.

"In addition to the academic and health care components, this will bring an economic development incentive to an underserved part of the state," Wetherell said. "We are bringing professional staff, students and significant operating and construction budgets to Immokalee. This program will have a positive impact on this community in so many ways."

The proposal calls for FSU medical students, along with students from other academic areas such as nursing, social work and psychology, to work with the local health care community. The College of Medicine will provide a faculty member on site to supervise the educational program and work with local physicians who will serve as clinical faculty.

When the program is fully implemented, selected medical students will fulfill several of the required third-year clinical clerkships at the teaching site. In addition, students from the medical school's four regional campuses throughout the state will have the opportunity to do rural health rotations in Immokalee.

"We are excited about this project because it is consistent with our mission, which focuses on the needs of rural, elderly and other underserved populations, and it enables us to provide innovative educational experiences," said

College of Medicine Dean J. Ocie Harris. "We look forward to working with Naples Community Hospital, the local medical community and Collier Health Services Inc. to bring this program to fruition."

FSU College of Medicine will affiliate with the NCH Healthcare System and its medical staff to provide the required educational experiences that cannot be provided at the Immokalee site. Physicians on NCH staff will be given the opportunity to apply for an FSU College of Medicine faculty appointment. FSU will develop elective rotations at the NCH Healthcare System facilities including Naples Community Hospital and North Collier Hospital for Students.

In return, FSU will provide the NCH Healthcare System with 5,000 square feet of space in the Isabel Collier Read Building to use for medical or medically related charitable purposes.