

Tallahassee Democrat.

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'Top tier' health care: FSU president makes case for TMH as an academic medical center

Richard McCullough Your Turn

Published 5:02 a.m. ET April 8, 2025

As discussions continue about the future of health care in Tallahassee, it's important to understand what an academic medical center (AMC) is and what it would mean for patients, physicians, and the broader medical field.

An academic medical center is a hospital that is closely partnered with a medical school at a major research university. It combines patient care, medical education, and groundbreaking research. It is a place where physicians, scientists, and educators work together to heal patients, discover new treatments, and train the next generation of health care professionals. Academic medical centers have driven some of the greatest advancements in modern medicine.

Here's what an academic medical center would mean for Tallahassee.

Your existing health care: Doctors who want to continue to focus 100% on direct patient care would do so, with no changes. There would not be any expectation for doctors currently here to do research. The hospital would remain committed to serving the local community and provide care to individuals who are uninsured.

Outlook for health care in Tallahassee with an AMC: Patients would have access to expanded top-tier medical care without having to leave Tallahassee. Tallahassee would have more doctors and health care professionals who perform specialized care and more doctors and health care professionals who provide excellent generalized care.

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In addition, an academic medical center would have doctors who conduct research to bring new, cutting-edge treatments to Tallahassee. The goal is to hire additional doctors who see patients and do research. This combined approach helps save patients' lives. A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that patients treated at hospitals with AMCs have up to **20% higher odds of survival** compared to those treated at non-AMC hospitals.

Cutting-edge treatments: Academic medical centers are known for developing new treatments and conducting clinical trials that give patients access to the latest innovations in medicine. I have personally witnessed how medical discoveries at academic medical centers have cured some cancers, transformed lives of those with genetic diseases, and greatly improved patient outcomes. Innovations in health care includes technologies such as advanced imaging, genetic therapies, artificial intelligence, and advanced diagnostics.

Economic growth: Investment in health care, medical education, and research will attract top talent, create new jobs in Tallahassee, and strengthen our local economy. AMCs provide more than 6 million jobs nationwide and contribute hundreds of billions of dollars to the U.S. economy each year.

A community partnership: TMH and FSU are both committed to having the hospital remain a community asset. While FSU is a state university, we are in Tallahassee and have always been firmly committed to the well-being of Tallahassee. To be clear, FSU is interested in creating an academic medical center with TMH to improve and advance health care in our community. There's no state takeover and employees would not become state workers.

Florida State University is already deeply committed to advancing health care in our community. We are very proud that our faculty in the College of Medicine are doing leading research and our students have been receiving clinical education from health care professionals in this community for decades. We have residents and fellowship

students in the community and many of our graduates are practicing here in Tallahassee.

Our goal is to expand these commitments and make them even better. With a \$134 million investment appropriated to FSU from the State of Florida, we are constructing a health research building in Tallahassee on TMH's campus. We are also borrowing \$419 million to build a 180-bed hospital in Panama City Beach called FSU Health.

Academic medical centers save and improve lives, train future medical professionals, ensure that communities benefit from the highest standard of care, and expand resources and expertise for our community.

As this conversation moves forward, we welcome an open dialogue with local officials, health care leaders, hospital staff, and members of the community.

The opportunity is here. Together, we can make it happen.

Richard McCullough is president of Florida State University, one of the top public universities in the nation.

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