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U of I Trustees approve new department; furthers UICOMP student expansion

PEORIA, Ill. [May 25, 2016] – Expansion plans continue at the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria with the creation of a new educational department, the University of Illinois Board of Trustees approved [last week](#).

The new Department of Health Sciences Education will oversee the foundational course work for all medical students on the Peoria campus, including first-year medical students beginning in August 2017. Previously, University of Illinois medical students assigned to Peoria spent their first year in Urbana before transitioning to Peoria for the remainder of medical school.

This new department combines professors across many basic science fields, including biochemistry, anatomy, physiology, cell biology, and microbiology, alongside teaching-focused doctors who provide direct patient care. The department also will oversee the delivery of a transformed college-wide curriculum on the Peoria campus.

“We’re excited about the expansion of the medical school, the benefits this provides our students, and the far-reaching positive impact on the future of health care in central Illinois,” said Dr. Sara Rusch, Regional Dean for the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria. “This new department is designed to change the way we teach medicine by integrating the basic sciences and clinical medicine in a way that will translate to better care for their future patients.”

A college-wide curriculum committee approved a new, accelerated teaching model that will condense the first two years of medical school into about 20 months. Students will spend more time in clinical settings and have greater opportunities for exploring various careers in medicine.

The expansion will bring 55 more medical students to Peoria annually and create a need for 20 new faculty and staff. An estimated \$1.5 million will be spent over the next year in facility upgrades and in preparation for the additional students, including construction of a new anatomical lab for cadaver dissection and improving classroom space. Total enrollment will grow from an average of 165 students to more than 220 annually.

The University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria (UICOMP) is one of four campuses that make up the largest public medical school in the country. Each year, UICOMP educates more than 150 medical students and nearly 270 physicians-in-training. The College of Medicine is home to the Cancer Research Center, the Center for Outcomes Research, and a collaborator in Jump Simulation.

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