

From the University of Mississippi Medical Center Division of Public Affairs

NEW RESEARCH TOWER TO BOOST BIOMEDICAL STUDY AT UMMC, PRIVATE STARTUPS

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JACKSON, Miss. – Construction of a new research building, which will include space for start-up biotechnology companies, could start in January 2013.

University of Mississippi Medical Center leaders plan to spend \$35 million initially on the eight-story shell of the Cancer and Biomedical Science Research Center and plan to finish the ground-, first- and second-floor interiors of the 220,000-square-foot building.

That work should take about 18 months. Contractors would complete additional floors as funds become available.

“We have very limited amounts of research space right now,” said Dr. John Hall, UMMC associate vice chancellor for research. “This building will give us space to implement at least part of our strategic plans for research growth.

“It will help us recruit scientists, expand our research centers and institutes, and develop the Biotechnology Research Park at UMMC.”

The new facility will sit just northwest of the Arthur C. Guyton Research Center, across University Drive and in the current Parking Lot 3A.

While it's too early to know the new building's design and layout, several tenants already are set. Biotech company incubator space will occupy about 25,000 square feet on one floor. That will mark the first phase of a long-term plan to construct the Mississippi Biotechnology Research Park. The building will also house laboratory animal facilities and UMMC Cancer Institute labs.

Hall said administrators will survey space needs of departments and research centers. “Some faculty members are in 1950s space, original buildings that have had no renovations. These facilities aren't adequate for modern research,” he said, referring to the North Wing of the original Medical Center building that opened in 1955.

UMMC income for sponsored projects – a majority of which were federal research grants – more than doubled in the past four years, jumping from \$35.7 million in FY 2008 to \$85 million in FY 2011. Faculty members who received new grant awards, new hires who transferred their projects to UMMC and federal earmarks account for much of the increase.

While the number of researchers and projects ballooned, key operations that support researchers and their departments received no additional space. For example, Laboratory Animal Facilities, which cares for mainly mice and rats that some researchers require, needs more room.

The UMMC Cancer Institute needs more labs, faculty and research grants to receive designation from the National Cancer Institute, a main goal set out by its director, Dr. Lucio Miele.

Additionally, the Women's Health Research Center needs more space, and the MIND Center, which studies neurocognitive diseases including Alzheimer's, has no laboratory research space of its own, Hall said.

The Arthur C. Guyton Research Building – known as Guyton One – opened in 1993, and represented the Medical Center's first modern facility dedicated solely to research space. The seven-story Arthur C. Guyton Research Center opened in 2008.

UMMC leaders recently selected Jackson-based Foil Wyatt Architects & Planners to design the new building. The firm designed the Norman C. Nelson Student Union and the School of Health Related Professions building. Flad Architects, a national firm specializing in health care, higher education, science and technology facilities, will advise on the project.

The federally funded business incubator space will allow private start-ups to lease laboratories practically next door to resources they'll need. Enticements include specialty services – like imaging, surgical and biostatistics expertise – sophisticated lab machinery and a wealth of biomedical research knowledge.

UMMC leaders put plans on hold last year for a Mississippi Biotechnology Research Park project at the old farmers market when Congress swore off federally targeted funds, known as earmarks. The project already had received nearly \$20 million in federal earmarks, and UMMC had taken ownership of the farmer's market property, located at West Street and Woodrow Wilson Avenue.

With little likelihood of further federal support, administrators opted to include biotech incubator space in the Cancer and Biomedical Science Research Center, which allowed use of the \$20 million for the on-campus building.

Target clients include health-care based research companies such as biotechnology, drug developers and medical-device makers. They may be start-ups, new divisions of existing companies or spinoff businesses by faculty.

The \$20 million earmarked funding comes through the National Institute of Standards and Technology. UMMC also will use \$7 million in bond-issued funds and \$8 million of its revenue for the project's initial \$35 million.

The building will help attract new researchers and grants as well as grow new biotech businesses, all of which could have hundreds of millions of dollars in long-term economic impact. Immediately, however, the construction itself will make a local impact.

Dr. David Powe, UMMC chief administrative officer, said each \$1 million creates an average of 14 temporary construction jobs. That means nearly 500 jobs for the initial \$35 million.

The Cancer and Biomedical Science Research Center represents just one part of the Medical Center's long-term plan. Utility work already under way, a new entrance to campus on Lakeland Drive and a parking deck will pave the way for new buildings in the long-term plan.

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