



Published on *Healthcare Construction & Operations* (<http://www.hconews.com>)

[Home](#) > School of Medicine Project Underway at WMU

School of Medicine Project Underway at WMU

School of Medicine Project Underway at WMU

(10/20/2011)

KALAMAZOO, Mich. — Plans for a new Western Michigan University (WMU) School of Medicine move forward with site selection expected later this year and the first students expected to enroll in fall 2014.

The project is a partnership between the WMU and Kalamazoo's two teaching hospitals, Borgess Health and Bronson Healthcare. Planning for the project has been underway for three years with fundraising, accreditation work and curriculum development for the medical school in progress.

In March, the privately funded initiative announced a \$100 million gift, from anonymous donors, for the medical school that will serve as the foundation funding for the four-year school. The cash gift, the largest ever made to a Michigan college or university, is among the 10 largest cash gifts ever made to an American public university and the 15th largest in the history of American higher education.

A school of medicine in Kalamazoo has been under discussion and in the planning stages since late 2007. In 2009, WMU received an anonymous \$1.8 million “seed money” gift that allowed the university and its partners to begin development of the medical school. Early in 2010, WMU filed a letter of intent and was awarded applicant status with the Liaison Committee on Medical Education, the group that accredits medical schools in the United States and Canada. Liaison Committee on Medical Education currently accredits only 134 medical schools in the United States.

Hal B. Jenson, M.D., assumed the post of founding dean of the Western Michigan University School of Medicine last spring. Jenson previously held the position of professor of pediatrics and regional dean for the Western Campus of the Tufts University School of Medicine. Private

funding specifically for the medical school will be used for Jenson's annual base salary of \$400,000.

WMU named Glastonbury, Conn.-based architectural and engineering firm The S/L/A/M Collaborative (SLAM) as the design firm for the project in August. SLAM was selected from a national field of companies seeking the role, and will partner with Kalamazoo-based Diekema Hamann Architecture and Engineering. The medical school's facilities committee originally screened 25 applicant firms and narrowed the list to a field of finalists. It made a final recommendation to the school's steering committee, which made the final decision.

"Designing facilities that help educate healthcare professionals is both rewarding and challenging," says SLAM President Bob Pulito. "There is so much excitement and good will in the community right now, our challenge will be to help capture and promote that good will with every decision as we move forward."

SLAM has an extensive background in both the design of new medical and educational facilities and the repurposing of existing buildings, both options that are under consideration for the WMU School of Medicine.

In October, Detroit, Mich.-based Walbridge was named the construction management firm for the project.

The facilities committee for the medical school received 11 proposals from throughout the country. It chose Walbridge based on the company's experience with complex projects that were built under aggressive schedules and designed with sustainability as a focus, according to WMU's David Dakin, who chairs the facilities committee for the medical school. Walbridge's background working in a higher education environments and its experience developing projects that include simulation labs also appealed to the committee.

Walbridge is a top-50 construction company founded in 1916. The privately held company provides construction management, design-build, general contracting and related services to customers in the arenas of higher education, health care, manufacturing, government and aviation. It employs more than 1,000 professionals in North America, South America and the Middle East.

News

Source URL: <http://www.hconews.com/articles/2011/10/20/school-medicine-project-underway-wmu>