The Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine at Western Michigan University would acquire the assets of Southwest Michigan Innovation Center Inc. under a proposed deal now going through an extended approval process.

The acquisition includes the land, building and equipment of the business incubator, located in WMU's Business Technology and Research Park. The Stryker School of Medicine would use the facility for medical research.

"Aligning the Southwest Michigan Innovation Center with the medical school is a win-win. This will facilitate both the medical school and the SMIC in reaching their full potential in the area of biomedical laboratory-based research," said School of Medicine Dean Hal Jenson.

WMU trustees voted Wednesday to back the deal. The purchase also requires approvals from the boards overseeing the medical school, plus Southwest Michigan First and the Kalamazoo Community Foundation that formed a partnership with WMU more than a decade ago to develop the Innovation Center to spur formation and support startup companies in the life sciences industry.

WMU at the time contributed land valued at $618,812 to develop the business incubator, plus a $3 million gift to go toward construction. The university retained the first right of refusal to acquire the Innovation Center with the original $3.6 million investment going to the purchase price, said Jan Van Der Kley, WMU's vice president for business and finance.

University trustees agreed to waive the right of first refusal so the medical school, which is private, could acquire the Innovation Center's assets.

When the sale goes through, the medical school will pay $500,000 to the Kalamazoo Community Foundation, which holds a $2.4 million mortgage on the Innovation Center. Southwest Michigan First will pay another $500,000 to the foundation to reduce the amount of the mortgage and will remain involved in the facility.

The medical school will assume payments on the mortgage and make payments totaling $1.1 million over four years starting in 2017, then pay $300,000 in 2021 using a grant from the Kalamazoo Community Foundation.

Acquiring the assets of the Innovation Center positions the medical school in close proximity to existing researchers and WMU's College of Engineering and Applied Sciences, "helping to satisfy the research requirement for its accreditation, providing opportunities for research collaboration with WMU faculty and students, and enhancing the reputation of (the medical school) and WMU," Van Der Kley wrote in a briefing memo to university trustees explaining the transaction.