

Western Michigan University begins search for medical school construction manager

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By

As development of a medical school in Kalamazoo continues to move along, **Western Michigan University** is taking the initial steps in the process to build its home.

The facilities committee for the **WMU School of Medicine** has issued a Request for Qualifications for construction management firms. To submit an RFQ questionnaire, which are due Aug. 3, firms must **contact Sherrill Busboom in the School of Medicine** by July 22.

WMU earlier issued an **RFQ for architecture/engineering firms**, said Bob Miller, associate vice president of community outreach.

"We are getting ready within the next few weeks to make an announcement of who that firm is," said Miller, also chair of the communications committee for the WMU School of Medicine.

That's just one of many more decisions yet to come.



Miller

"The \$64 question that everybody poses is **'Where is it going to be?'** — and that has not been decided yet," Miller said. "As a matter of fact, the architectural-engineering firm will — and the construction management firm may also — be involved with helping the facilities committee make that decision as to where will be the best location for this facility."

Hal Jenson, founding dean, and some initial staff members of the School of Medicine have been **operating out of office space at the Bronson Upjohn Building** in downtown Kalamazoo since May.

WMU might consider new construction or renovating an existing building for the medical school's permanent home, Miller said.

"A new facility may indeed be built," he said. "In addition, there are a number of assets in the community that could potentially be repurposed for use by the School of Medicine."

The facilities committee would like to select a construction management firm by the end of October, and construction could begin as early as September 2012, Miller said.

Many other committees are planning other aspects of the medical school, which is targeting an opening of fall 2014. In addition to the facilities and communications committees, other groups include a curriculum, a simulations and a library/information technology committee. They're all interrelated, Miller said.

"It's not unlike the process we go through when we're going to build a new academic building at Western Michigan University," Miller said. "One of the first things that the director of campus



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WMU President John Dunn in March announced a \$100 million cash donation to the medical school.

planning will do is engage the faculty from that particular department to say, 'What is it that you need this building to do? What do you need to be able to do inside this building?' That kind of discussion is very much taking place between the facilities committee and the curriculum committee.

"When you build a building like this, form follows function."

Two notable components WMU has identified as important for a modern medical school are simulation — "in terms of a simulation laboratory or environment" — and research, Miller said.

"It's obviously going to be a multi-purpose facility, a teaching environment," Miller said. "But incorporated in that are the aspects of simulation and research."

The budget for the facility and the size of the facility have not been determined yet, Miller said, though the facility committee is looking for a firm with experience in the construction of academic medical school projects of 150,000 square feet or larger.

Firms should also have a significant presence in Michigan and experience in the construction of simulation labs as part of or associated with a medical school. And WMU is looking for a firm with projects incorporating sustainable design principles.

"It's probably premature to think in terms of LEED certification at whatever level," Miller said. "However, it's been WMU's practice for quite frankly several years on every new project that an element of sustainability is very much a part of the discussion process."

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