

Nov 13, 2003

College of Medicine Gains Official Designation as National Center for Rural Health Professions

Rockford, IL., -- University of Illinois trustees voted unanimously today to designate the Center for Rural Health Professions at the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Rockford as the National Center for Rural Health Professions.

With the official designation, the College of Medicine moves forward in its campaign to eliminate rural health disparities throughout Illinois, the nation and the world. Continued efforts to train doctors and other health professionals in Illinois to address the unique issues surrounding rural healthcare, now stands to be a model for other medical schools, both in the United States and abroad.

After today's vote, Sylvia Manning, chancellor of the Chicago campus, commended Bernard Salafsky, Ph.D., regional dean of the Rockford campus and Trustee Robert Vickrey for their undaunted efforts to make the national center, and thus, the future success of the program a reality.

The importance that the University of Illinois board of Trustees have assigned to the issues of healthcare disparities in rural Illinois, through this action, signals the unique achievements and coming promise of the College of Medicine as it assumes the role of a National Center for Rural Health Professions," Salafsky said.

The College of Medicine at Rockford implemented the specialized rural medical education program in 1993. In 2000, the program was expanded to begin facilitating the training of nurses, dentists, pharmacists, mental health social workers and public health administrators to work in rural communities. With the expansion of the programs, the available space at the College has been exhausted.

In February of this year, Congress made a substantial appropriation of \$1.5 million to take the College one step closer to the construction of a \$24 million, 72,000 square-foot building to house the center for Rural Health Professions. In the federal appropriation, Congress made the initial reference to the National Center. Today's action by the Board of Trustees accepts and formalizes the national designation.