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FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Idaho State Journal

Pocatello, Idaho

Thursday May 18, 2017

Wire Report

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Groundbreaking held for Idaho's first med school

MERIDIAN — Construction on Idaho's first medical school has begun.

Idaho State University President Arthur Vailas, Idaho Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter and other officials promoted the planned Idaho College of Osteopathic Medicine at a Wednesday groundbreaking ceremony at ISU's Meridian campus.

With construction costs projected at \$34 million, the 94,000-square-foot for-profit osteopathic medical school would be an ISU affiliate next to ISU's Health Science Center in Meridian. The construction costs are all privately funded.

"This is truly a great moment in history," Vailas said. "It's a great moment in history for Idaho education."

Earlier this month, the medical school was awarded its pre-accreditation status by the American Osteopathic Association's Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation. This pre-accreditation status allows the school to begin construction.

While the potential osteopathic college hasn't yet received academic accreditation, ICOM founder and trustee Dan Burrell told the audience that construction phases on the planned for-profit school would be finished by May 17, 2018.

"One year from today, our building will be complete," said Burrell, with construction equipment and a mound of dirt in the background. "We'll be accepting our first 150 students. We have already begun to put together what I believe is a sort of dream team in terms of the faculty and administration that will grow over the next 12 to 16 months."

With Meridian-based construction firm Engineered Structures Inc., or ESI, leading the project, construction is expected to take 13 months, according to a press release.

The college is projected to open its doors to students in fall 2018. Once it opens, ICOM officials said the school will look to admit as many as 150 students in its first year, with annual tuition at about \$40,000.

According to a press release from ICOM, doctors of osteopathic medicine are licensed physicians who provide a range of services, such as prescribing drugs and performing surgery. The school's graduates are expected to increase the number of physicians in the state.

According to ICOM, Idaho is ranked 49th for the number of physicians per capita and 50th for lack of primary care physicians per capita in the nation.

Vailas, who thanked ISU colleagues and the Idaho Legislature, also credited Otter for pushing the osteopathic college project despite opposition.

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“It takes a lot of courage to stand up to controversy,” Vailas said. “And Gov. Otter has backbone. And a heart for the people of Idaho.”

Otter, a third-term Republican, acknowledged there have been “doubters” about the proposed public-private partnership to build the Idaho College of Osteopathic Medicine.

“All I say to them (project opponents) is, they were wrong, we were right, and I’m glad we stuck with it,” Otter said.

by Dave Goins for Idaho News Service

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