MARK YOUR CALENDARS: THE GRAND OPENING CELEBRATION FOR HEALTH SCIENCES FACILITY II WILL BE HELD ON THURSDAY, MAY 8TH.

As you know, the School of Medicine will occupy 70 percent of the building; the School of Pharmacy will fill the top two floors. There will be tours of the new building, special guest speakers, refreshments and more! Planning is still underway for the big day and invitations for its various activities will arrive in your mailbox next month.

BUILDING ALLOCATION

The building allocation plan has not yet been finalized, but I hope to be able to announce who will occupy portions of building in next month’s SOMN News. Some space will be left vacant for the recruitment of new faculty and for new programs. I can tell you now, however, that HSF II will house our new NIH-funded Emerging Pathogens Research Center, which will provide biosafety level 3 research laboratories for working with dangerous organisms. This will enable us to expand our prestigious programs in infectious disease surveillance, epidemiology of infectious disease, basic research in emerging pathogens, and vaccine development.

HSF II will also contain the world’s newest and most sensitive nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) machine, which will allow us to unravel the structure of proteins important for the development of vaccines against bioterrorism agents, as well as proteins important in the fight against cancer and many other diseases.

CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Approximately 18 months have passed since construction began on HSF II. The project is on schedule and will come in at a projected cost of $56.5 million. Presently, the exterior finish brickwork has been completed on all sides of the building, along with the limestone on the curved east façade. The granite base on the ground level has been completed and all the windows have been installed. Interior finishes are ongoing and subcontractors are beginning to complete work on the lower floors.

All interior walls have been erected, and a primer and first coat of paint have been applied. Wood paneling is being installed in the lobby and ground floor seminar room. Light fixtures and ceiling grids are in place, and workers are progressing with the acoustical ceiling tiles from the ground floor to the sixth floor. Laboratory casework and fixed equipment, such as fume hoods and environmental rooms, have been completely installed.

From a mechanical perspective, the five major air-handling units that will provide the heating and cooling throughout the building have been installed and are operational. The air-balancing contractors are continuing their work to balance the airflow in the building.

Four specialty areas of the building – the NMR Suite, the Biosafety Lab 3 Suite, the 107-seat Seminar Room, and the Executive Conference Room – are slightly behind schedule due to design changes. However, we anticipate that these areas will be substantially completed by the grand opening in May. The NMR Suite is expected to have at least one of the three magnets installed by the end of April. Delivery of the new 800MHz NMR is scheduled for later this month from Germany.

WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH First of a three part series

WOMEN IN MEDICINE: Celebrating Women’s History Month

Throughout the past several decades the role of women in medicine has changed drastically. Women are entering the medical field at increasing rates and securing more leadership positions. For example, here at the School of Medicine, women make up thirty-three percent of our faculty, eighteen percent of all professors are women, thirty-four percent of new hires are women and twenty-six percent of division chiefs are women. These statistics are above the national average. In addition, sixty percent of the class of ’06 are female.

Though these statistics are promising, there is still much to be done in terms of increasing leadership roles in medicine for women and continuing to make the field even more family-friendly.

In order to paint a picture of how today’s female physicians balance their professional and personal lives and to honor March’s Women in History Month, SOMN News talked with Donna L. Parker, MD, associate dean for Student & Faculty Development. A 1986 graduate of the School of Medicine, and mother of two children, Dr. Parker is a perfect example of how one can balance a professional and personal life. She sees patients one morning a week, spends half a day per week working on admissions, and the rest of her time dealing with student and faculty development.

When asked what it is like to be a woman in the field of medicine in the 21st century, Dr. Parker responds, “Light years better than what I read about the women who came before us. There seem to be new opportunities every day, and more and more women entering medicine leads to more fellowship among women. There are still patients who think it odd to see a woman doctor, but there are also patients who request a woman physician.”

Dr. Parker does see changes in her field in relation to balancing family issues. She says balancing family and career are no longer just women’s issues. “I have been amazed at the number of male medical students who are very concerned about their ability to have a family life and be a doctor,” comments Dr. Parker. “Perhaps the older generation was concerned about this, but was not comfortable voicing it. I think this is a real positive step for the field that all of us are concerned with finding the right balance between providing excellent care for our patients and making time for the important people in our lives. Ultimately, that balance makes us better physicians.”

For Dr. Parker, the key to her success at work and home is, “a great husband. He’s wonderful about offering to help with the kids and being flexible with his schedule,” she says.

Professionally, Dr. Parker also gives credit to the Department of Medicine. “After I had my first daughter in 1994, I decided that I really could not work full time and do the job as a mother that I wanted to do,” says Dr. Parker. “I was told by numerous colleagues in the Department of Medicine that I would not likely be permitted to negotiate a part time position because there was no precedent. However, I was able to work it out with the department, which I think was a ‘win’ for both of us. I’m grateful for the vision of those who made that decision.”

What is Dr. Parker’s advice for finding balance? “Do work that you love, try to make to yourself and reassess your priorities and options often,” Dr. Parker recommends. “If you want to have a family, find a partner who is understanding about the demands of your profession.”

Next month SOMN News talks with Barbara L. Bau, MD, pro-fessor, Department of Surgery.

Donna L. Parker, MD
**FUN fact**

Did you know that ten School of Medicine faculty are members of the prestigious Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences?