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Rx For Research Success: What will a medical school bring to UNLV research and discovery?

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R_x For Research Success

What will a medical school bring to UNLV research and discovery?

By Dr. Barbara Atkinson
Medical School Planning Dean

AS UNLV SEEKS SUPPORT FOR A MEDICAL school, much of our advocacy has focused on community impact, and rightly so. Las Vegas is the largest urban area in the United States without a public allopathic medical school. Our lack of such a facility makes it more difficult to deliver the level of high-quality healthcare that Southern Nevada needs and deserves.

But what impact will the medical school have on the university and its research endeavor?

Simply put, medical schools that perform research are at the front lines of scientific innovation and discovery. They conduct sophisticated studies on diseases, drugs, and procedures that advance the practice of medicine, and they train their students to think outside the box about established courses of treatment. They also attract highly motivated faculty and students — the type of pioneering scientists and scholars who produce breakthroughs with real-world applications and commercialization potential.

Additionally, medical schools typically seek and receive high levels of federal funding to conduct research: The average research funding for U.S. medical schools is \$85 million annually. An infusion of this kind of funding would, in and of itself, drive UNLV's overall success to new heights, placing the university in the top tier of research universities across the country.

This is not to suggest that UNLV faculty members are not already conducting sig-

nificant research in a whole host of areas within the health care field. Just a quick review of the stories in the preceding article in this publication will give you a glimpse of the kind of creative, applied health care research that is currently underway. But a medical school offers the potential of greatly enhancing these efforts by creating opportunities for new investigations and collaborations among UNLV faculty and others in the community.

For instance, a school of medicine could build upon UNLV's relationship with the Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health, a world-class facility in Las Vegas that cares for patients with Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, and multiple sclerosis. The medical school plans to work with the center to expand our current research programs involving genomics in Alzheimer's patients and to develop new clinical trials of drugs that target patients' genetic makeup.

This is just one example of the types of partnerships that will grow out of medical research at UNLV. The potential for additional research — and the improved health care that results from it — is limited only by the number of faculty and the ideas they can generate.

With its promise for bolstering our science and scholarship, enhancing our academic reputation, and making our funding comparable to the world's best research institutions, a medical school is truly a prescription for success, not only for our community, but for UNLV research as well.



Dr. Barbara Atkinson
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Want to learn more about the UNLV medical school? Visit www.unlv.edu/medicalschooll