UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS COLLEGE OF MEDICINE
CARING FOR THE STATE

Without the College of Medicine, physicians in the state of Illinois would be considerably fewer and farther between. The University of Illinois College of Medicine and its four campuses train and retain physicians across the state who serve nearly 90 percent of the counties in Illinois. Our mission is to produce new knowledge in the medical sciences, develop best practices in health care delivery and educate the next generation of physicians and biomedical scientists committed to serving the needs of Illinois and the nation.

1 of 6 physicians in Illinois Porno received their MG or resident training from the College of Medicine.

upcoming UICOMP events

February 18
Cook Well, Eat Well, Live Well
“Taming the Heat of Inflammation through the Foods You Eat”
ICC North Campus • 5-9 p.m.
309-672-4598

March 12
SnowBall
Hotel Pere Marquette • 6 p.m.-midnight

March 18
The 2016 Residency Match
Gateway Building • 10 a.m.

April 13
Student Research Day
UICOMP Lobby • 2-6 p.m.

April 16
Pediatric Resource Center “Kick Abuse” 5k run/walk
Kickapoo Creek Winery • 8:30 a.m.

April 28
Cook Well, Eat Well, Live Well
“Feeding the Gut Biome for Health”
ICC North Campus • 5-9 p.m.
309-672-4598

May 5
Student Awards Event
Peoria Zoo • 5:30 p.m.

May 7
2016 Convocation
Peoria Civic Center • 2 p.m.
On December 21st, the College of Medicine held a press conference. In attendance with me at the podium were Tim Killeen, President of the University of Illinois; Dimitri Azar, Dean of the University of Illinois College of Medicine; Jim Ardis, Mayor of Peoria; Debbie Simon, President and CEO of UnityPoint Health – Methodist-Proctor; and Dr. Stephen Hippler, Chief Clinical Officer, OSF HealthCare System.

We officially announced that the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria is revolutionizing Peoria medicine by expanding. This expansion is possibly the single, most important addition to the school since it opened 45 years ago in downtown Peoria. We believe this expansion will have a significant positive effect on our students, our partner hospitals, and our central Illinois community.

Beginning in August of 2017, first-year medical students will begin medical school here in Peoria rather than at the Urbana campus. This important change will bring 55 more medical students to Peoria each year as well as the faculty and staff who teach them. You will learn more details in the pages to follow, but the benefits will be many. The growth of our campus will have a positive ripple effect across the community by improving our ability to retain medical students in Peoria to practice medicine. It will help recruit expert physicians from around the country here to teach, practice medicine, and conduct scientific research; and this will in turn have an equally important and positive effect on the local economy.

Medical education is key to physician recruitment. I’m one example. I came from Wisconsin to be part of the Internal Medicine residency program at OSF Saint Francis Medical Center in 1978 and I’ve been here ever since.

The medical education we provide would not be possible without the strong collaboration we have from our partner hospitals and clinics. It’s by working hand-in-hand that we have accomplished so much. Our announcement that UICOMP will educate students across all four years of medical school on the Peoria campus further strengthens our healthcare economy. With a national shortage of up to 90,000 physicians predicted by 2025, the presence of a strong College of Medicine in Peoria provides a real advantage to central Illinois.

In addition to the 55 students, we currently anticipate adding 20 faculty and staff jobs early in 2017. We estimate this expansion will have a $2.6 million annual impact on the local economy. Also, in the near term, we will have to make renovations to our building to accommodate our growth with a new anatomical laboratory and a technology-rich learning studio.

This is important. We are revolutionizing medicine in Peoria. We are expanding our campus, transforming our curriculum, strengthening our partnerships, developing simulation technology, and enhancing our cancer program – all with one goal – better patient care leading to a healthier Peoria, a healthier Illinois and a healthier world.

I ask you to please join me in embracing this historic change that I believe will have a huge, positive impact on all of us.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sara L. Rusch
Regional Dean

Questions, comments or story ideas for Pathways? Call 309-671-8404 or email dhaney@uicomp.uic.edu.

Pathways is published semi-annually by the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria to provide alumni, faculty, staff, and friends with an overview of our academic, financial, and scientific endeavors.

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Editor/Writer
David Haney
Senior Director of Development
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Paige Harrmann
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Advisors & Contributors

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Pathways is a publication of UICOMP’s Office of Advancement and Community Relations.

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Pathways is also available online at peoria.medicine.uic.edu/pathways.

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UICOMP has graduated 1,857 medical students beginning with the first graduating Class of 1973
SEVENTH ANNUAL
Celebration of Excellence

UICOMP honored more than 70 faculty members for their teaching, award-winning research and outstanding service at the annual Celebration of Excellence in November. Also recognized were the recipients for the coveted Community Health Awards.

“The work that each of you do here today will last for years to come – through high quality patient care, cutting edge research, innovations in education and in the creation of future leaders and policy makers,” Dr. Meenakshy Aiyer said in welcoming the crowd of 150 people. “You should be proud of what you do!”

AMONG SOME OF THIS YEAR’S RECIPIENTS:

FACULTY OF THE YEAR
J. Stephen Marshall, MD

UICOMP OUTSTANDING RESEARCH
Carmen Kirkness, PhD
Eleonora Zakharian, PhD

UICOMP OUTSTANDING SERVICE
Ken-ichiro Fukuchi, MD, PhD
Craig P. Griebel, MD
Matthew D. Jager, DO

UICOMP OUTSTANDING TEACHING
Lisa T. Barker, MD
Marc D. Carrigan, MD
Elsa L. Vazquez-Melendez, MD
Krisha K. Veerawalli, PhD

UICOMP OUTSTANDING TEACHING AND SERVICE FOR COMMUNITY-BASED FACULTY
John E. Lovell, MD
Robert T. Parrish, MD
Sara Zafar, DO

GOLDEN APPLE
Roger W. Geiss, MD, as chosen by the Class of 2017 M2 students
Matthew J. Misciher, MD, (2) as chosen by the Class of 2016 M3 students and the Class of 2015 M4 students

OUTSTANDING SENIOR SCHOLAR
Lorin D. Whittaker, Jr., MD

COMMUNITY HEALTH AWARDS
A 19-year tradition of recognizing special contributions in patient care, health-support services, medical education, research, wellness programs and disease prevention, the Community Health Awards are given each year to a local individual and organization. Recipients are selected by a committee composed of past recipients and representatives of local service groups.

2015 COMMUNITY HEALTH AWARD FOR AN INDIVIDUAL:
DR. PATRICK ELWOOD
Recognized by many as “the central Illinois father of neurosurgery,” Dr. Elwood was the driving force in developing and advancing neurological services in the Peoria area, including establishing the neurosurgery residency in Peoria. His career spans more than 50 years. Dr. Elwood is a prominent neurosurgeon, scholar, mentor, and known by many patients as a lifesaver.

2015 COMMUNITY HEALTH AWARD FOR AN ORGANIZATION:
HUMAN SERVICE CENTER
Celebrating 40 years in the community in 2016, the Human Service Center has evolved over the years as the needs in mental health have evolved in central Illinois. The Human Service Center is a behavioral health center providing an array of mental health and substance abuse treatment services – providing inpatient and outpatient residential programs for both mental health and substance abuse; providing an on-site primary health care clinic in conjunction with Heartland Community Health Clinic; offering medication assisted treatment for individuals with substance use problems; and the Emergency Response Service – a 24-hour-per-day, mobile, police-dispatched, crisis intervention program.
A group of Quest Charter Middle School students in November got a small dose of what it’s like to be a doctor, while running out some fun physical exercises in the school gym.

The activity was part of GUIDES (Guide, Understand, Inform, Drive, Educate and Serve), which aims to mentor underserved students to build trust between the underserved and the medical community and teach young students about medicine. Throughout the school year, UICOMP medical students devise and put on the activities at Quest.

“We want to focus more on interactive opportunities for these students because we feel like that has a lasting impression,” Jean Lee, a UICOMP third-year student, told the Peoria Journal Star. The GUIDES program was featured in a Dec. 16 issue of the newspaper.

Students on that particular day learned how to administer a patient health history, and why it’s important, along with a physical exam and other tests, in order to make a proper diagnosis. To add to the excitement, the medical activities were intertwined with a physical relay.

GUIDES
Middle School Mentorship Program Still Going Strong

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Below Left: Second-year UICOMP student Carley Dentschak is secured onto a backboard during a GUIDES program with Quest Middle School Students. Below Right: Fourth-year UICOMP student Nathan Ackerman acts as if he has gone unconscious and stopped breathing.

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Community Contributions

The University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria was recognized in December by the Peoria District 150 Board of Education with the Community Contribution Award for the College’s Manual High School Enrichment Program.

For more than 12 years, UICOMP medical students have hosted Manual High School students on campus for a series of fun, but educational and hands-on classes. The enrichment program was and is designed to encourage minority students and students of low socioeconomic background to gain more interest and knowledge in science and medicine. Each year, the program is a bit different but has included learning how to suture, dissecting a pig’s heart, and participating in a mock emergency medical situation. Each year, the program also ends with a career panel.

District 150 created the award to recognize community groups that are doing positive work within the Peoria School District.

Student Announcements

Five members of the Class of 2016 and two members of the Class of 2017 have been inducted into the Alpha Omega Alpha Medical Honor Society.

Congratulations to Nathan Ackerman, Katherine Groesch, Jun Lee, Thaddeus Maguire, and Ryan Robin from the Class of 2016, and to Kevin Hodge and Jeremiah Pflederer of the Class of 2017.

Alpha Omega Alpha was founded in 1902 by William Webster Root and five other medical students at the College of Physicians and Surgeons, which eleven years later became the College of Medicine of the University of Illinois. Alpha Omega Alpha is organized for educational purposes exclusively and not for profit, and its aims shall be the promotion of scholarship and research in medical schools, the encouragement of a high standard of character and conduct among medical students and graduates, and the recognition of high attainment in medical science, practice, and related fields.
The following excerpts detail UICOMP student Andrei Froehling’s recent trip to Haiti. Froehling participated as a nonmedical volunteer in a two week medical mission trip with the Friends of the Children of Haiti, a not-for-profit that provides medical care to more than 15,000 Haitians each year during six medical missions – missions that often include UICOMP faculty and students.

**Arrived at Port au Prince airport. From there, we flew in a Cessna to the town of Jacmel, and then by truck rode to the clinic in Cyvadier, Haiti. Our group of 18 spent the afternoon unloading bags we brought with us, mostly multivitamins, antibiotics, ibuprofen, and supplies like bandages, bottles, and diapers.**

**I am assigned to assist other nonmedical volunteers. This meant mostly pulling files of returning patients. Most returning patients are being treated for chronic conditions, such as hypertension, diabetes, and asthma. I saw a man suffering from a testicular hydrocele, a man with traumatic leg injuries from falling off his motorbike, a small girl with an extra toe, and a boy with signs of anemia.**

**A large portion of my time was spent assisting the dentist. Dental work in Haiti entailed pulling out rotting teeth and not much else. His light source for working was poor so I used a bright pen light to help. I also assisted the nurses with wound care. A small boy was brought in by his grandfather for second-degree burns. After two hours of cleaning him, we bandaged him and told the grandfather to return the following day to change the bandages. I saw and assisted with several other cases.**

**I went with the surgeon to watch him perform surgery at a hospital in Jacmel. I was unable to scrub into any of the surgeries due to a lack of sterile gowns and gloves. They use cloth drapes that are rewashed. The first patient was a 6-year-old boy with cryptorchidism and an indirect inguinal hernia. The next case was a 57-year-old nun with a breast mass. Her case was the only one done that day under general anesthesia. The last two cases of the day were a ventral abdominal hernia repair on a 34-year-old woman and an indirect inguinal hernia repair on a 24-year-old man. Both of these were done with spinal anesthesia like the small boy from earlier.**

**Most of this day was spent assisting the dentist. During the course of the day, I pulled three teeth.**

**Most of my morning was spent assisting with debridement of the burns on the boy’s back. We are seeing great improvement of his burns. The remainder of my morning was an assortment of handing out toys to the children and assisting the dentist with his work.**

**We loaded up into two vans to Port au Prince for the flight back. By the end of the clinic, the providers saw 2,105 patients; the dentist pulled 415 teeth; and I enjoyed helping the people of Haiti. I would like to thank Dr. Patrick Renick and the Rural Student Physician Program for allowing me this great opportunity. I wish to return some day with this organization.**

Interested in learning more about the Friends of the Children of Haiti organization? Visit them online at fotcoh.org or by calling 309-369-8118.
Dr. Jeffrey Sterling, a 1991 UICOMP graduate, made a stop in Peoria recently while on a book tour for his newly released book, “Behind the Curtain: A Peek at Life from within the ER”.

Dr. Sterling’s book provides “an unfiltered look inside the real-life trauma and triumphs that define emergency medicine,” according to his website.

Trained in Peoria, Dr. Sterling worked at Cook County Hospital in Chicago and has headed ERs in Washington D.C., Milwaukee, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. He is the CEO of SterlingMedicalAdvice.com and 844-SMA-TALK. Dr. Sterling holds degrees from Northwestern University, Harvard University School of Public Health (Health Policy Management), and the University of Illinois College of Medicine Peoria.

UICOMP recently was awarded more than $440,000 by the National Institutes of Health to expand a study focusing on dysfunction in the brain’s immune system and how this impacts the development of Alzheimer’s Disease.

The research, led by Dr. Ken Fukuchi, focuses on specific immune cells found in the brain. As the function of these immune cells decrease, deposits of a toxic plaque called amyloid increases. This amyloid plaque is believed to be responsible for the mind-robbing effects of Alzheimer’s Disease.

“Think of these immune cells like a scavenger that eats up waste in the brain, but as we age – and particularly for those with Alzheimer’s – this function decreases allowing the build-up of amyloid,” said Dr. Fukuchi, a medical doctor with a PhD in genetics who has spent nearly 30 years researching Alzheimer’s Disease. “We’re very excited to be able to expand this research since we’ve seen good outcomes in our initial findings, and we believe this will lead to new types of treatment for Alzheimer’s.”

The NIH grant will fund the expanded study over the next two years. This is one of three research projects Fukuchi currently has in Alzheimer’s at UICOMP.

While only 10 percent of people 65 and older are diagnosed with Alzheimer’s, the numbers explode as people continue to age. About one-third of those who are age 85 and older have Alzheimer’s, and the number of affected people is expected to be 15 million by 2050, according to the Alzheimer’s Association.

Docappella is a medical student-run a cappella group that in recent years has grown to include residents and UICOMP employees. Their performances include the UICOMP holiday breakfast, Celebration of Diversity dinner, the Student Awards Ceremony and caroling on the pediatric floor at Children’s Hospital of Illinois. They currently have 15 members and are always recruiting!
It’s exciting to announce that it is almost time to begin our campus renovations! The construction has been planned for the least amount of disruption to our students and will begin this summer. When you look at the renderings and hear about the M1 arrivals, our advancement team can’t help but join in on the preparations.

We are in the process of building a fundraising initiative that can help enhance not only the facility plans but faculty and student programs as well. We will be seeking advice from our community leaders, our current and retired physicians and our students to guide us through our philanthropic movement. Donors will have an opportunity to name learning centers, study spaces and labs. Research, scholarship, and student programs also are options.

With technology advancing so quickly, students will have state-of-the-art tools available to them for success. Therefore it is necessary for the renovation to capture that need. We hope you join us in our excitement as we change and update our campus to help provide our students with a better learning environment.

Thank you to all of our gracious donors who have supported us in the past and with your most recent year-end contributions. Together we will continue to find those cures and develop knowledgeable and caring physicians committed to providing quality health care for our Peoria community and abroad.

With Warmest Regards,

Dolores Metzger

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Two Awesome Events, Two Spectacular Causes, One Shared Vision: Finding a Cure

Dr. Muhammad B. Yunus Student Research Award

A generous donation of $25,000 to the College of Medicine by Dr. Alfonse and Nancy Masi on behalf of the MTM Foundation created the Dr. Muhammad B. Yunus Student Research Award to help cover the costs of UICOMP students attending national meetings to present their medical research. An additional matching donation of $25,000 was made by Dr. Yunus toward establishing the $50,000 endowed fund.

The fund was created to recognize the contributions Dr. Muhammad B. Yunus has made to research, teaching, and rheumatology clinical services at UICOMP. In particular, Dr. Yunus is recognized for his pioneering personal commitment to research in fibromyalgia syndrome, related pain disorders, and the concept of central sensitivity syndromes.

Dr. Yunus has been a member of the UICOMP faculty since 1979, and is recognized by many as the “Father of Fibromyalgia”. His pioneering research included a landmark 1981 published clinical study of 50 patients which provided the first controlled study that stimulated research in fibromyalgia syndrome. A subsequent report in 1990 provided the first official criteria for its diagnosis.

TRACY TROT

The Third Annual Tracy Trot, the primary fundraiser for the Theresa Tracy Strive to Survive charitable foundation, raised more than $40,000 to battle pancreatic cancer this year.

About 500 people registered and 150 plus volunteered for the 4 mile run and 2 mile walk held at the East Peoria Levee District on November 7, 2015. Of the $40,000 plus raised, $30,044 was presented to UICOMP for on-going pancreatic cancer research. An additional $10,044 is earmarked to Illinois CancerCare for patient care.

“We have an amazing all-volunteer group who are driven and throughout the year put forth a passionate effort in the fight against pancreatic cancer, and in memory of Theresa,” said John Kahl, President of Theresa Tracy Strive to Survive. “Simply put, we want a cure for this deadly disease and we want to help do what we can to find it.” In just three years, the volunteer organization has raised nearly $100,000 for pancreatic cancer research and patient care.
Beginning in August of 2017, first-year medical students will begin the long trek to becoming a doctor in Peoria. This is a historic change for the College of Medicine in Peoria. The positive impacts will be wide.

Since UICOMP opened more than 45 years ago, students have spent their first year of medical school in Urbana before transitioning to Peoria for years two, three, and four. The same has always been the case with students assigned to the Rockford campus.

The future expansion means 55 more medical students will be coming to Peoria each year, including the faculty and staff who will teach them. There will be renovations on campus – creating a new anatomy laboratory and a technology-rich learning studio for starters – and together with the other College of Medicine campuses, the curriculum will undergo transformation.

Beyond the initial and physical changes, however, the wider and more far-reaching impact will be felt through increased health care services and improved quality of health care across the region and the state – realized through increased medical education, research and innovation activities.

“We believe having all four years of medical school education occurring in Peoria will benefit the students and benefit our community as it will enhance our ability to retain and recruit future physicians to continue to build the already strong health care community we enjoy here in Peoria,” Regional Dean Sara Rasch told an audience of UICOMP faculty and staff, affiliated hospital leadership, and prominent local leaders during a town hall meeting in December with University of Illinois President Tim Killeen. “We’re revolutionizing medicine in Peoria.”

A streamlined and integrated curriculum across all the campuses and across all four years of medical education will allow students earlier clinical exposure; the four-year campus will eliminate the disruption many students face when they move to Urbana, only to move again to Peoria a year later; and current students point to improved cohort development among the classes.

“As a first-year in Urbana, there are so few upperclassmen to turn to with questions or to get advice from about a particular class or even what to expect,” says Paige Bailey, a second-year UICOMP medical student. “Having all four classes together on one campus I think will help students as they advance, and add mentoring opportunities, too.”

Total student enrollment at UICOMP will grow from about 165 to 230-plus medical students annually, adding to UICOMP’s ability to recruit medical expertise to Peoria for teaching and providing direct patient care. Currently, about 20 faculty and staff positions are estimated to be required to educate the new class.

Why change?
The transition has been sought in Peoria for many years but came about as a combination of wanting to improve the student experience and the University of Illinois Board of Trustees approving the Carle-Illinois College of Medicine. The new medical school being planned on the Urbana-Champaign campus will be geared toward medicine, engineering and entrepreneurship. A task force concluded the transitions would benefit the entire university.

So what’s happening now?
An M1 work group committee formed both at the Peoria campus and College-wide tasked with accomplishing several goals. Among them: revamping the curriculum, renovating key spaces on campus for the expansion, and hiring the necessary faculty and staff. Dr. Meenakshy Aiyer, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, is leading that charge. She’s put together more than a dozen subcommittees with well over 100 faculty, staff and students all participating in the planning process.

In addition to improving the long-term health of central Illinois medical enterprises, the expansion in Peoria is expected to provide a boost to the local economy.

An estimated $2.6 million will be generated annually to the local economy as a result of the additional students and resulting jobs, based on data provided by the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council through the use of an economic impact tool called EASI.

Separately, the University is planning to spend an estimated $2.5 million over the next 18 months in facility upgrades and in preparation for the additional students.

“The University of Illinois College of Medicine is the largest public medical school in the nation and will remain so through this move,” said University of Illinois College of Medicine Dean Dr. Dimitri Azar. “We are recognizing the excellence that is happening in the delivery of healthcare and education in Peoria. Currently, one out of six physicians who are practicing medicine in Illinois graduated from the University of Illinois College of Medicine, but with this move (by creating four-year campuses in Peoria and Rockford), we hope to increase that to maybe one out of five or one out of four.”
FOOTNOTES IN UICOMP HISTORY

1970
The Peoria School of Medicine officially opened its doors on July 1, 1970. Dr. Nicholas J. Cotsonas, Jr. was appointed as the school’s first Dean.

1971
The School of Medicine becomes the educational sponsor for OSF-USMC residencies, including surgery, internal medicine, pediatrics, and OB-GYN.

1972
The School of Medicine moves to Bradley University’s Burgus Hall from its original offices in downtown Peoria’s First National Bank building.

1973
The first class of 18 physicians graduates; also, the School of Medicine becomes the educational sponsor for family medicine with Methodist.

1974
A groundbreaking ceremony was held to announce a new facility for the School of Medicine on 24 acres of land at what is now One Gilruth Drive.

1976
By the late 1970’s, the Department of Graduate Medical Education had become responsible for residency and fellowship training programs.

1980s
The Peoria School of Medicine building opens in November with a dedication ceremony.

1982
The new Peoria School of Medicine building opens in November with a dedication ceremony.

1993
The Peoria School of Medicine is renamed to The University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria.

1994
The Pediatric Resource Center was established in conjunction with OSF Saint Francis Medical Center and Children’s Hospital of Illinois.

UICOMP Expansion: In their Words...

“"I think the M4 expansion increases the opportunity for local physicians to be involved in medical education as well as allowing the medical school more opportunity to shape medical education in progressive and responsive ways. I think there will be more continuity of interaction with students and educators allowing educators to better tailor the curriculum and this will certainly be of benefit to those students who might struggle in the transition from the first to the second year of medical school. I also think that when education is part of the foundation of a medical community, there is a great emphasis on cost-effective, evidence-based practice that will be of ongoing benefit to the community at large.”

— Lisa Fosnot, MD, UICOMP Class of 2014 and Internal Medicine resident at OSF Saint Francis Medical Center

“The expansion of the med school to a 4 year campus makes me very proud. It shows that the medical school in Peoria is truly becoming an independent entity and not just a place to stop and do clinical training. I think it will mean a lot to the community and be a source of pride as well. The medical community in Peoria has always been something special, especially for a city of its size.”

— Ryan P. Walsh, MD, Chief Medical Information Officer, The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, a Class of 2002 UICOMP graduate and Family Medicine Residency graduate Class of 2005.

“"This expansion is huge. UICOMP has always been a thriving medical school, but now it will be complete with having our first year students start here as well. It will be nice for the students to have that continuity for the years of their medical education.”

— Thembi Conner-Garcia, MD, UICOMP Class of 2000 and Internal Medicine Resident graduate Class of 2003

“The UICOMP M4 expansion allows Peoria to further develop our medical educational resources. The additional faculty and students living in our community will be a boon to the downtown medical campuses and nearby warehouse district. We are confident the M4 expansion will be another step in solidifying Peoria’s place as a hub for medical education, research and healing.”

— Peoria Mayor Jim Ardis

“I think the most important benefit will be to have basic science faculty here for the students to access and also for the convenience of the students not having to move again. The community will benefit by having basic science faculty and research here as well.”

— Robert Sparrow, MD, Chairman of the Peoria Medical Alumni Council and 1979 UICOMP graduate

“At OSF HealthCare, we are always looking for the best ways to transform care to improve the lives of those in the communities we serve. We see the expansion of the medical school, and the potential curriculum changes, as a great opportunity to help create the medical workforce of tomorrow.”

— Steve Hippler, MD, Chief Clinical Officer, OSF Healthcare System, and 1984 UICOMP graduate

“UnityPoint Health – Methodist | Proctor has a long-standing history of working with the College of Medicine to improve the quality and delivery of health care across central Illinois. We are looking forward to working with Dr. Sara Rusch and the University of Illinois as the college expands. Our Family Medicine and Psychiatry residencies will grow stronger with new opportunities to interact with and mentor medical students as they begin their careers in medicine. We also believe having students in Peoria for all four years of medical school will increase our ability to recruit them to the communities we serve.”

— Debbie Simon, President and CEO of UnityPoint Health – Methodist | Proctor
Planning and Executing the UICOMP Expansion

Nearly 60 UICOMP faculty, students and staff are participating in a dozen committees and subcommittees all geared around expansion of the Peoria campus to include first-year medical students by the fall of 2017.

“There are a lot of moving pieces,” said Dr. Meenakshy Aiyer, an internal medicine-trained physician and UICOMPs Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. “The committees are looking at every aspect of the medical school’s curriculum to develop cutting-edge, forward-looking curriculum focused on the health of Peoria. We need to develop future generations of physicians who are able to adapt to health care’s ever changing environment while maintaining those fundamental skills that are the hallmark of the profession.”

The committees – 12 in all on the UICOMP campus – are not alone. Each of the other three campuses has its own sets of committees dedicated to many of the same tasks in order to institute cross-campus collaboration in this unified effort.

Under the microscope: how curriculum is being delivered in the UICOMP campus. The curriculum we are building to support the expansion of the Peoria campus will instill the traditional values of medical practice, such as compassionate care and communication, while incorporating new technologies in places like anatomy and histology,” Dr. Aiyer continued. “We’re also looking at population health, compassionate care, wellness initiatives, and mentoring and wellness programs for students as well as team-based, interactive methods for learning, flipped classrooms, interprofessional education, and patient safety. The curriculum developed by this faculty today will have an impact on patients’ lives in 10 years from now.”

Building a Vision

The UICOMP campus is undergoing a major transformation that will, when complete, provide all four years of medical school in Peoria for the first time since the campus was founded 45 years ago. But to make it happen will require some new space. About $1.5 million will be spent over the next 18 months on renovation of existing space on the second floor of the main campus for a new anatomical laboratory and a new technology-rich learning studio. Demolition work could begin as early as spring.

The anatomical lab, to be located on the west side of the building near pathology classrooms, will include both traditional cadaver dissection as well as advanced technology. Think of having a large touch-screen tablet the size of an adult with all the various parts of the anatomy able to be viewed. With the touch of a finger, students will be able to “remove the skin” to view underlying muscle tissue and then correlate that to an X-ray, a CT scan, and a patient history, allowing for better integration of anatomy and clinical relevance. The space also will include a small locker room for students to change.

On the opposite side of the building, plans are being developed for the new learning studio. This room, which will expand an existing classroom, will be equipped with the latest educational technology and organized for team-based learning, purposely designed to better model how doctors work collaboratively to diagnose medical issues.

This new space will change and challenge how medical curriculum is delivered, and feature designs and technology to optimize group learning, improve and develop valuable communication skills, navigate an immersive learning environment, and solve complex problems. Students will learn and practice their communication and collaboration skills in ways previously unimaginable.

“The curriculum we are building to support the expansion of the Peoria campus will instill the traditional values of medical practice, such as compassionate care and communication, while incorporating cutting-edge technology, advanced research, and longitudinal continuity of clinical training,” said Regional Dean Dr. Sara Busch. “In order to prepare the next generation of physicians and health care leaders, it is critical we build a technology-rich learning environment where these objectives may intersect.”

Learn more about the UICOMP expansion at peoria.medicine.uic.edu/news/m1
JUMP SIMULATION: Engineering the Future of Sepsis Care

By John Vozenilek, MD, FACEP

We’ve known from day one that closing gaps in health care requires diverse sets of employees working together to come up with innovative ideas. One pioneering way we’re doing this is through the Jump ARCHES (Applied Research for Community Health through Engineering and Simulation) program where we pair clinicians with engineers to solve ongoing health care problems.

That project is already leading to the development of technologies and devices that can transform health care delivery in the future and improve outcomes. We want to expand on that work to tackle one of the top ten leading causes of disease-related death: sepsis.

Jump is part of an effort to convene a think-tank, called Resilience SIMULATION: JUMP (Applied Research for Community Health through Engineering and Simulation) program where we pair clinicians with engineers to solve ongoing health care problems.

We’re going to leverage the power of the National Center for Supercomputing Applications at U of I to determine how to best use data analytics and multi-dimensional modeling for problem-solving. We’ll also discuss using sensors and instrumentation to detect sepsis remotely. This could mean using a sensor on a patient who is perhaps 150 miles away to detect a change in condition and then provide input to medical professionals who could save that person’s life.

The fourth pillar is where Jump lives every day—and that’s coming up with best practices in education, and using human factors and industrial engineering to understand futuristic employee workflow around such technologies.

Conference on Sepsis

We’ll be bringing in speakers who are experts in the field and convening a broader audience to discuss new solutions for sepsis. The products of that conference will guide our pursuit of future funding for treatment.

If we can create a concept map of what transformational research can be done and funded today in anticipation of these technologies five to ten years from now, we’re looking at a future clinical state where we can improve outcomes considerably.

Focus of the Sepsis Collaborative

There are four pillars that will be used as a guideline to develop this plan for sepsis treatment. The first is using concepts in genetics and precision medicine to come up with devices that can better detect the disease.

The second pillar will delve into data analytics and computer science. Here we’re going to leverage the power of the National Center for Supercomputing Applications at U of I to determine how to best use data analytics and multi-dimensional modeling for problem-solving. We’ll also discuss using sensors and instrumentation to detect sepsis remotely. This could mean using a sensor on a patient who is perhaps 150 miles away to detect a change in condition and then provide input to medical professionals who could save that person’s life.

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Meeting new mandates typically are not met with much fanfare but UICOMP took advantage of a new set of institutional requirements for residency accreditation by building in room for improving the entire model by which graduate medical education is delivered.

The UICOMP review process is innovative in that it involves continuous quality improvement, reviews every program every year, and incorporates milestones and CLER (Clinical Learning Environment Review).

“Very few other universities have such a comprehensive process,” said Gerald P. Wickham, Ed.D., Assistant Dean for Medical Education & Evaluation at UICOMP.

Drs. Wickham and Marc Squillante (Emergency Medicine) spearhead the College’s committee on “Annual Institutional Review of Programs” to fulfill the new mandate from the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME). Working in partnership with Dr. Tom Santoro, UICOMP’s Associate Dean for Graduate Medical Education, Squillante and Wickham conceptualized the review process.

In addition to involving continuous quality improvement, milestones and a review of the clinical learning environment, the review involves the collection of key performance metrics for each program, and in-depth separate interviews with core faculty, representative residents and program leadership. The information is analyzed across all programs for review (and possible intervention), and in the end, a report also is generated and sent to the programs and UICOMP’s Graduate Medical Education Committee.

“The review provides both granular and high-level views on how well we are teaching our residents and allows us to make improvements in our programs based on metrics,” said Dr. Santoro.

Six months into starting the program, six of UICOMP’s 11 residency programs have been evaluated.

“Residents, faculty, and program leadership have been very open in sharing their impressions and concerns, which has been key to helping us provide them with useful feedback,” said Dr. Squillante.

Adds Dr. Wickham: “As we gather more data, and analyze themes that are relevant across programs we can be more strategic in addressing challenges – and in celebrating our strengths!”

And it’s gaining attention.

The design, function and cross-program themes of the program will be highlighted at the ACGME Annual Education Conference at Washington, D.C. in February — one of 150 selected nationwide as an innovation poster, and one of only 10 to be selected for oral presentation.

“I think this shows our internal review process is at the forefront of redesigning accreditation processes,” said Dr. Wickham.
According to 2015 statistics, pancreatic cancer is the fourth leading cause of death in both men and women. This cancer is challenging because it presents with obscure clinical signs and is often diagnosed after it is well advanced. The cancer quickly develops resistance to chemotherapy. These characteristics make pancreatic carcinoma a devastating diagnosis with high mortality and a prime target for research.

Christopher Gondi, PhD, a research assistant professor in the Department of Medicine, is working on a solution to pancreatic cancer, specifically why these cancer cells develop resistance to chemotherapy and how to change their sensitivity to drugs. He is working in a unique model system of zebrafish embryos.

Zebrafish embryos (Danio rerio) are becoming a valuable model of cancer research for many reasons. The adult fish are easy to maintain and produce hundreds of eggs overnight. Zebrafish eggs and embryos are translucent, allowing scientists to track development early and easily; and the fish develop quickly.

The striking feature is that the embryos can support the growth and development of human pancreatic cancer cells. The embryos inoculated with cancer cells develop tumors with blood supply. The tumors can be easily treated with chemotherapeutic agents added to the water in a Petri dish. These characteristics make zebrafish embryos almost ideal for studying cancer biology and response to treatments.

COR has established a zebrafish facility to support this novel research. The facility includes a series of aquaria interconnected with a filtration system, capable of housing up to 2000 fish.

The event generated more than 60 research ideas. “Patients provide a unique and valuable perspective that sometimes may be overlooked,” said Carl Asche, PhD, Director of the Center for Outcomes Research. “Fatigue, for example, is a major issue for many people living with multiple sclerosis, and in many ways earlier stages of the disease can be unseen to outside observers. Many participants were thankful for an opportunity to come together as a community, and we are optimistic about a lasting future for the Patient-Led MS Research Community.”

The event was a result of a collaboration between Central Illinois Multiple Sclerosis Council, Illinois Neurological Institute (INI) Multiple Sclerosis Center, UICOMP, and is partly funded through a Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) Pipeline-to-Proposal Award (2-46600-124), administered on behalf of PCORI by MPHIL. Funding also was provided by the Central Illinois MS Clinic Fund.

What’s next?

COR is diligently preparing for the next stage of their research collaboration which will be to develop four distinct comparative effectiveness research questions stemming from the patient-led MS research community. These questions will be discussed with the MS patient community and then one will be selected for consideration as part of the Tier 2 PCORI award submission in the Spring of 2016.

Other efforts include MS proposal submissions in the Spring of 2016 to the National MS Society and other national funding bodies. All future funding opportunities will be led by COR and UICOMP in collaboration with the Central Illinois MS Council and the INI Multiple Sclerosis Center.
As we age, the likelihood we encounter aches and pains of many arthritis and rheumatic disorders like rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis increases, even more so for women than men. Ankylosing spondylitis (AS) is another common rheumatic disorder often affecting the back, but strikes earlier—usually presenting in late adolescence or early adulthood and more frequently in men than in women. Recent research at UICOMP in collaboration with Bradley University and incorporating UICOMP medical students is helping to investigate a novel biomechanical mechanism in this disorder.

Results published in the November 2015 issue of Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation help support a biomechanical mechanism in ankylosing spondylitis proposed by UICOMP’s Dr. Alfonse Masi. He suggests that increased stiffness or tonicity of paraspinal muscular and fascial (myofascial) tissues could result in increased stresses and microinjury at vertebral attachments, which are the typical pathological lesions of AS. In short, stiffer paraspinal muscle tissues in genetically predisposed persons could be an underlying risk factor.

Testing his theory, researchers did something that had not been done before. They accurately measured the lower back resting muscle stiffness in a community cohort of AS and healthy control subjects between ages 18 and 46 years. They used a mechanical impulse–based measuring device (myotonometer), which noninvasively quantifies the tissue stiffness, tension, and elasticity. The results revealed greater mean lumbar myofascial stiffness in AS patients than in the control subjects. Immunological mechanisms continue to be claimed as the causative pathway in AS and related disorders. However, immunological mechanisms alone would not explain the unique earlier onset age and male preponderance of AS, unlike a biomechanical pathway.

Previous research at UICOMP studied lipid profiles in AS patients versus those with non-inflammatory arthritis conditions. The hypothesis was that increased paraspihal myofascial tonicity would result in greater energy expenditures. In turn, the AS alteration would tend to decrease various serum lipid levels, analogous to increased physical exercise. The hypothesis was supported by findings in two separate studies, which included UICOMP James Scholar research graduates.

Lead author of the recent research article, “Greater resting lumbar extensor myofascial stiffness in younger ankylosing spondylitis patients than age-comparable healthy volunteers quantified by myotonometry”, is James Scholar and 2014 UICOMP graduate, Brian J. Andonian. Co-authors include students and faculty at Bradley University who performed the measurements. Collaboration is continuing with Bradley University in studies of lumbar myofascial stiffness of normal subjects and those with chronic non-specific low back pain under Dr. Masi’s general guidance.

INNOVATION AND COLLABORATION BACKS UICOMP RESEARCH

Novel clinical research in Ankylosing Spondylitis ties James Scholar project with Bradley University; published in a recognized journal.
Dr. Slagle

David Slagle, MD retired in December after more than 22 years with UICOMP, where he spent most of that time as the Medical Director of the Heart of Illinois HIV/AIDS Center. A Fellow of the American College of Physicians, Dr. Slagle spent 16 years of service as a medical officer before retiring from the U.S. Army Reserve. He has been honored four times with the Physicians Recognition Award by the American Medical Association. In addition to his teaching and clinical duties, Dr. Slagle conducted research funded by Health Resources and Services Administration for 20 years.

Dr. Aiyer

Meenakshy Aiyer, MD, FACP, UICOMP Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Professor of Clinical Medicine, was named in December among the 2015 Women of Influence by InterBusiness Issues magazine. "They are thinkers and doers, leaders in their fields, and strong advocates for Greater Peoria, whose influence can be felt in every corner of the community," the magazine stated. "In turbulent times, they are stewards of the future and mentors to the next generation, making positive difference in the world and blazing a trail for others to follow." Dr. Aiyer, who has been recognized nationally for her work at UICOMP, talks about her passion for teaching, her goals for the College of Medicine, and life lessons learned along the way, including her “secret” to maintaining a balance between work life and personal life.

Dr. Holterman

Ai-Xuan Holterman, MD, Professor of Surgery and Pediatrics, and a surgeon scientist at UICOMP was selected and has begun a fellowship in the Hedwig van Ameringen Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine® program at Drexel University College of Medicine in Philadelphia. Dr. Holterman, a member of the UICOMP faculty since 2011, was one of 54 fellows selected from a highly competitive pool of applicants to be accepted into the program, designed to prepare women for senior leadership roles in academic health science institutions.

announcements

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Technology & Instruction

Leslie Hammersmith was named Assistant Dean for Technology Enhanced Instruction at UICOMP. In this new position at UICOMP, Leslie will work with faculty to design innovative educational programs for medical students and residents. She will work with UICOMP’s collaborators to create and utilize technology to enhance simulation education and training in the overall curricular process.

Prior to coming to UICOMP, she served as the Principal Instructional Technology Consultant for the Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning at Indiana University, where she established, coordinated, and managed strategic activities around instructional technologies, active learning spaces and learning technologies activities.

Global & Rural Health Initiative

Sarah Stewart de Ramirez, M.D., MPH, MSc, joined UICOMP in October as a visiting professor on a part time basis to complete the Global Rural Health Initiative needs assessment and strategic plan. Over the next year, Dr. Ramirez will be working with faculty and staff at UICOMP, Jump, OSF, UnityPoint Health, and in the community to develop a cohesive plan for the formation of a comprehensive hub for global and rural health programs.

Currently, the Assistant Director for Global Emergency Services in the Department of Emergency Medicine at Johns Hopkins University, Dr. Ramirez recently spent two years in Namibia in health systems work for the U.S. Agency for International Development. While completing her degree at Harvard, she held numerous leadership and consulting positions with various organizations, including the World Health Organization, the Gender Health Equity Network, the United Nations, and the International Office of Migration. She also held the position of senior global health fellow for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and in that capacity, designed a pan-African strategy for the promotion of malaria prevention, control and treatment throughout sub Saharan Africa.

Preclinical Education & Evaluation

Jessica Hanks, MD, Assistant Professor of Clinical Medicine and Pediatrics, was appointed Assistant Dean for Preclinical Education and Evaluation in Academic Affairs at UICOMP. A graduate of UICOMP, Dr. Hanks completed her residency in combined Medicine-Pediatrics at the University of Michigan. She joined the UICOMP faculty in 2009 and has served in multiple roles, including Director of the Medicine-Pediatrics ambulatory clinic and Associate Program Director for Internal Medicine.

In this new role, Dr. Hanks will work with faculty and students to implement innovative, active teaching methods and assessments to better prepare students for the practice of medicine. She will work with faculty and leadership to build the M1 curricula; work with the campuses in the curricular transformation efforts related to preclinical education; and effectively transition learners from the pre-clinical to clinical years. She also will help coordinate the UGME curriculum with her counterparts from the other three UICOM campuses.