

Medical mannequins heart of \$17M proposal

By David Pittman

david.pittman@amarillo.com

Publication Date: [09/25/08](#)

Local medical educators will ask state lawmakers for \$17.5 million to build a complex with lifelike mannequins to train nurses and doctors.

"The simulation can train you and expose you to all those other things that you are exposed to in health care," said Gary Barnes, vice president for business and finance at West Texas A&M University.

For the past year, officials at WT, Amarillo College and Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center have worked to create an integrated medical-simulation center, where nursing and medical students can gain safe clinical experience on high-tech mannequins.

The potential 32,000-square-foot, two-story building would house medical-simulation mannequins to mimic six intensive-care rooms and 10 to 12 clinical settings.

"I think all of us feel absolutely confident that we'll have something," said Richard Jordan, regional dean for the Tech school of medicine.

Tech is asking for the money from state lawmakers.

The Don and Sybil Harrington Foundation announced Wednesday it has pledged \$314,000 in support of the project's planning and staffing.

The Harrington Regional Medical Center is set to donate 4 to 5 acres near Tech's campus off Coulter Street.

"We think it's going to be a lovely building that all of Amarillo will be proud of," Jordan said.

In the meantime, Tech has set aside space in the Laura W. Bush Institute for Women's Health at 1400 Wallace Blvd. for a temporary center.

Simulation mannequins allow students to practice and see almost everything they do in real life. The mannequins talk, have pulses, vomit, accept IVs and react to everything a student does to them.

WT has fully incorporated its three mannequins into nursing classes.

The school spent \$80,000 last fall to buy its first interactive, lifelike mannequin for nursing students to train without the fear of harming a person.

Amarillo College, which has two high-tech mannequins, hopes to use simulation training for 25 percent of student clinicals in the future. Students used AC's mannequins for more than 3,100 hours combined last semester.

"I know our faculty and students are very excited because it makes it real,"

said LuLu Cowan, special assistant to the president.

While officials at the three schools are keeping their collective fingers crossed to get state funding for a new building, they are lining up ways to fund the center's operational expenses.

The schools would charge area hospitals "reasonable user fees" to use the site so nurses can fulfill continuing-education requirements.

Organizers continue to rally support for endowments and already have some backers, including Bell Helicopter.

"I guess that's why I'm so encouraged about getting endowments," Jordan said. "People see this as something truly worthwhile."

The schools hired Martha Howell to serve as the center's director. Howell helped run a simulation center in Temple, a coalition between Texas A&M University, Temple College and Scott & White Hospital.

"We wanted to have someone who's done this so we could learn from their mistakes," Jordan said.

Click here to return to story:

http://www.amarillo.com/stories/092508/new_news11.shtml

© The Amarillo Globe-News Online