



SCLF addition opens

SIU President Glenn Poshard visits campus

Written by Karen Carlson • Photography by James Hawker

Five years ago, Dean J. Kevin Dorsey, M.D., Ph.D., Associate Dean for Research Ed Moticka, Ph.D., and several other SIU School of Medicine officials met on the lawn behind the Springfield Combined Laboratories Facility (SCLF). They pushed shovels in the cold January dirt, ceremoniously breaking ground for the addition that was to be built.

September 2006 was the official opening of the 105,000 square-foot, five-story addition to the SCLF that will be shared among the School of Medicine, the Department of Public Health (IDPH) and the Illinois State Police.

“[This lab] will serve as a catalyst to attract new research to this facility,” said SIU President Glenn Poshard. “But to retain or recruit top flight researchers takes a commitment to increasing state resources for faculty and staff salaries. This is a commitment I share.”

The SCLF addition frees up space for the growing number of researchers at the School, particularly those affiliated with the SimmonsCooper Cancer



Institute at SIU.

SIU Department of Microbiology and Immunology and Cell Biology will use space on the first, second and third floors, advancing current biomedical research efforts in genetics and post-genomic medicine and infectious disease. Eleven research laboratories meet requirements for Biological Safety Level II labs. Tissue culture rooms and faculty offices are housed there. All labs have an exhaust hood; some rooms have several.

The space also includes several equipment rooms, a confocal microscope room and new space for the research imaging facility, which includes electron microscopy, and addi-

tional laboratory animal medicine space.

SIU School of Medicine is sharing space on the third floor with the Illinois Department of Public Health. Top security measures allow scientists to safely work with infectious agents and combat bio-terrorism agents in a suite of Bio Safety Level 3 laboratories. Research in bioterrorism includes testing and researching toxic biological agents such as anthrax, infectious diseases such as SARS and small pox, and virulent chemical compounds including sarin, ricin, and mustard gas.

Technological features of the facility will allow faster test results and new opportunities for research. High-tech security measures ensure employee and public safety. The level-3 laboratory is the only facility of its kind in downstate Illinois.

The laboratory also is used for molecular microbiology studies and standard state analysis of human specimens for diseases and water and food samples for bacteria.

“This lab allows us to broaden our research capabilities in terms of the



Poshard addresses School employees

Southern Illinois University President Glenn Poshard, Ph.D., spent a day at SIU School of Medicine in Springfield addressing the School's myriad of missions.

During an address to the packed South Auditorium, Poshard praised the history of the School and looked forward to its future.

"Priorities this school holds have a profound effect on every individual seeking health care from Springfield to Cairo," Poshard said. "I want to be part of a story that will be told in the not too distant future about the state-of-the-art cancer center, and research trials and treatment that can be obtained at the SimmonsCooper Cancer Institute," Poshard added.

He spoke of caring, compassionate cancer treatments in a clinic setting and pushing the research infrastructure to achieve a designation as a national cancer institute. "I want to be a part of the SIU School of Medicine creating tens of thousands of cancer survivors in central and southern Illinois over the next 30 years."

A native of White County in southeastern Illinois, Poshard commended the School's efforts in rural and underserved areas.

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Top: President Poshard address School of Medicine employees in Springfield.

Middle: Dr. Morris Cooper, Sen. Larry Bomke (third from left) and President Poshard take a tour of the SCLF addition with reporters.

Bottom: Dr. Brewer sorts through boxes outside his new office in the SCLF addition.

“I can think of no other affliction that is more unfair to the poor and medically underserved than cancer. To have this disease and not have the means to seek the most cutting edge treatment known to medical community is something those of us in positions of leadership cannot and should not tolerate.”

He reminded the audience that SIU Carbondale’s goal is to become a top 75 research university before SIU’s 150th anniversary. “When we accomplish that goal, it will be in large part because of the effort of this school.”

Poshard especially is encouraged by the \$1.1 million stem cell research grant awarded to the school. “These researchers are joining the effort with thousands of other researchers across America.” Despite the controversial nature of cell regeneration, Poshard said he is committed to the effort. “I just think it’s important,” he said after the address. “There are so many possibilities to help Parkinson’s Disease, Alzheimer Disease and spinal cord injuries.”

With so many opportunities on the horizon, Poshard stressed his belief in the foundation of the School of Medicine: training new doctors. “I hope we don’t change the mission,” he said, crediting Richard Moy, M.D., the School’s first dean, and SIU’s former president, Delyte Morris, with the vision of a community-based medical school. ■



Clockwise from top: Workers move researcher’s equipment into the SCLF addition. Mary Pauza, Ph.D., works with Siying Peng. Ko Watabe, Ph.D., unpacks in his new lab.

type of organisms we can deal with, funding we can apply for, and type of faculty we can employ,” said Morris Cooper, Ph.D., chair, Department of Microbiology and Immunology.

The Illinois State Police will move its laboratories to the top two floors of the SCLF addition when construction of this section is completed next year. The Springfield police lab processes 13,000 cases per year for 300 different law enforcement agencies encompassing 33 counties. Their facility will analyze latent prints, analyze DNA samples and test evidence for the presence of controlled substances. Other areas include a firearms section, a footwear and tire track section, a documents section testing for forgery, and a trace chemistry section to analyze evidence from arson cases. It is part of the third largest crime lab system in the world.

“We place a great deal of importance

on DNA,” said Illinois State Police Director Larry Trent. “It’s important to remember that we convict the guilty and free the innocent.”

Officials worked for about a year and a half to release funds to open the facility, which was completed in 2004.

President Poshard noted the partnership that helped secure the increase in the School’s operating budget from the state government to allow the facility to open. “This project represents a significant step forward for medical school. I want to thank the governor and state legislature — Senator Bomke in particular — for listening to plans for this facility and providing the resources necessary to make progress. ... It’s a great day for all of us, and this facility has a great future.” ■