

Kirksville seeks dentistry school

BY STEPHANIE HALL
Staff Reporter

The Kirksville community is attempting to offset the cost of a new dentistry school in order to feel the effect of a potential \$98 million economic boost.

Heinz Woehlk, vice president for communication and special assistant to the president at A.T. Still University, said the Northeast Missouri Health Council Inc. and a local committee are raising awareness and money to help sway the ATSU Board of Governors to choose Kirksville as the location for a new dentistry school. Their competition includes San Diego and Orlando, Fla.

Once the school reaches capacity at 70 students per year in the four-year institution, the economic impact would be approximately \$98 million annually.

"It's going to take a strong, organized, coordinated community effort for us to overcome both San Diego and Orlando, Fla. to win this expansion," said Phil Tate, director of job creation for Kirksville Regional Economic Development Inc.

Tate said the dental school would be the most exciting and important economic de-

velopment that Kirksville has had in years. The dentistry school would add approximately 300 more students and professors to the city's population. It would also increase the number of prospective students and students' families visiting Kirksville.

"It is not the traditional economic development we think of, in terms of bringing a new company to town," Tate said. "It doesn't really fit that mold, but it will have outstanding economic impact on the community and the region."

Last Friday, an unexpected source of support for the dental school arrived when NMHC was awarded \$3.8 million to help promote oral health and primary care in northeastern Missouri. Andy Grimm, CEO of NMHC, said they entered their project to receive funding from the United States Department of Health and Human Services under the Affordable Care Act.

"The timing of this award is extremely good for the Kirksville community," Grimm said, according to the Oct. 11 press release. "Particularly in light of the discussions ATSU is having regarding the establishment of a new dental school in Kirksville."

Grimm said the NMHC re-

search found many barriers for rural northeastern Missourians attempting to access oral health care, and that he hopes this funding will help residents gain access to more care. The funding is for all nine counties the council presides over and is specifically for "the operation, expansion and construction of Community Health Centers," according to the press release.

"The Northeast Missouri Health Council is extremely interested in a partnership that could create a Teaching Health Center, a model being developed across the country," Grimm said, according to the press release. "We are very hopeful that ATSU pursues a school in Kirksville, as the synergy created by our two organizations working together could increase the number of patients we could serve even more."

Ranee Brayton, local committee co-chair and associate CEO at the Northeast Regional Medical Center, said a committee was formed that is dedicated to raising funds for the potential dental school. She said it aims to raise one million dollars to present to ATSU's Board of Governors as a show of goodwill. The committee hopes to have the money raised



Karli-Rae Kerr/Index

Kirksville is in competition with San Diego and Orlando, Fla. for a new dentistry school through A.T. Still University.

by February, when the Board will make its decision.

She said the committee's first goal is to educate the public about the potential dentistry school through meetings. Its first meeting is noon today at the Shrine Club and is open to the public.

"Our plan is to establish broad support and educate those who aren't aware of the impact of a dental school coming to Kirksville, to the economic benefits," Brayton said.

She said dentists, business owners, banking industry professionals and real estate companies have contacted the committee and pledged their support for the new dental school. Brayton said the committee's second purpose is to identify groups and individuals who could support the fund-

raising effort.

She said other cities also are very interested in attracting the dental school, so the committee's focus is to show Kirksville's community support. She said an additional school and additional students would bring more diversity and economic growth, which will aid the whole Kirksville community, including Truman.

"Because education is one of the cornerstones that Kirksville is built on, and we are recognized as a community for education, this is simply another way to demonstrate community support for higher education and the impact it has on the area," Brayton said.

Last week, ATSU began working on a feasibility study to test Kirksville's viability for a new dental school. Woehlk said

they would be looking at cost, availability of faculty, location of the dental school, number of patients for students to see and other factors.

"Most importantly, Kirksville is a rural area and ATSU's mission in its medical schools and its dental schools and its other schools is to serve the underserved populations and uninsured and underinsured people and rural areas," Woehlk said. "So that fits very well."

Woehlk said the dental school would provide more dental and oral health care for the underserved population in Missouri, and especially northern Missouri. He said there is a national shortage of dental practitioners and that the average age of dental practitioners is 55.

BOG to discuss budget, construction projects

BY ELIZABETH KOCH
Staff Reporter

The Board of Governors' second meeting of the semester is at 1:30 p.m. Friday in the SUB Conference Room.

Matthew Potter, chair of the Board of Governors, said the University's fiscal issues would be the main concern of the school year.

Potter said the University budget depends partially on state appropriations.

"We're in the stage right now where we're coming up with plans, but until we determine exactly what our appropriations will be from the state, it's hard to sug-

gest the level of modifications to the budget," Potter said. "We're looking at long-term ways to continue the fiscal viability of the University."

He said the Board has faced fiscal issues in the past, but planning ahead for the future is something that needs to be done this year.

In addition to the budget, the Board is working on construction projects such as Ryle Hall's renovation and Pershing Building's expansion, Potter said. He said both projects are on schedule.

Potter said the Board is happy with the increased enrollment this year and would like to keep recruiting the same amount and

caliber of students in the future. He said he is excited to continue working with University President Troy Paino and newly-appointed out-of-state, non-voting board member Michael Zito.

Although it was a highly debated issue at the first meeting, the Board of Governors is waiting for more information before proceeding further in its review of the smoking policy, Potter said.

Luke Freeland, student representative to the Board of Governors, said the potential smoking ban could have a major impact on students if implemented, and the president's office is looking into various solutions to see which

would work best at Truman, he said.

"Right now we're working from different angles to try and get enough information that the right decision can be made, as far as how to implement and what kind of smoking ban, if any smoking ban at all," Freeland said.

Freeland said students should attend Board of Governors' meetings.

"The students should care about the Board of Governors because they are the highest governing body for Truman State University," he said. "They're ones that have the final word on what we spend money on, what gets budgeted and

rules, such as the smoking ban. In essence, they make decisions for the University, and the University is here to serve students."

Freeland said his position is important because it gives the Board an inside view of students' opinions and perspectives. He said he wants to have as much input as possible from students concerning potential budget cuts.

The Finance and Auditing Committee and the Budget and Capital Conference Committee will be meeting today. The committees will present points they discussed in these closed meetings to the Board at the open meeting Friday.



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