



## ‘A game changer’: The Hackensack-Seton Hall School of Medicine and Research Facility

Redevelopment is a huge boost for health care, higher ed, state

By Andrew George, January 19, 2015



On a stage with Seton Hall President Dr. A. Gabriel Esteban, Roche Vice President Tom Lyon, U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell and New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, Hackensack University Health Network CEO Robert C. Garrett tried to sum up the significance of the announcement.

“A game changer,” he said.

“An absolutely monumental event,” he offered.

*Robert Garrett, CEO of Hackensack University Health Network, speaks at the Hoffmann-La Roche campus, which will become a school of medicine in a joint venture between Hackensack and Seton Hall University. - (PHOTO BY AARON HOUSTON)*

“We know that, with this partnership, we will be able to rival the best of the best,” he boasted.

No one in the standing-room-only crowd of hundreds of people who make up a who's who in New Jersey politics and the health care industry doubted the statements.

The only question: Was he talking about the still-to-be-named Hackensack-Seton Hall school of medicine, the world-class research facility that will accompany it, the ability of the state to finally figure out how to repurpose the campus of an outgoing corporation or the clear sense that this was going to be a huge plus for health care, education and business development?

What was clear: The announcement was worth celebrating.

"This is a great day for everybody here," U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell (D-Paterson) said. "You can feel the electricity. New Jersey needs days like this."

They bring a better future, Christie said.

"We know that by continuing to grow our academic core, we will grow our economic core as well," he said.

The future school will be the anchor tenant of the 119-acre property that's situated approximately 5 miles from both Hackensack and Seton Hall.

Project organizers aim to make the school a conduit for a world-class research facility that will attract researchers and pharmaceutical companies of all sizes to the campus.

Officials hope the inaugural class of approximately 125 to 150 students can enter in the fall of 2017; the official name of the institution has yet to be determined.

It is too soon to know just how many jobs will be created because of the vast scope of the project, but Hackensack and Seton Hall officials said the school alone could create 400 to 500 jobs. Hundreds of other jobs could also be created through the other outlets on the campus, both said.

The developer of the project, to be selected by Roche, has not been announced, but those same officials said it has been made clear by Roche that the medical school will get favorable lease terms as well as a large say in how the rest of the campus is developed.

Hackensack and Seton Hall, which will share all capital costs 50-50, figure to invest "hundreds of millions of dollars in the first 10 years" to get things going, Hackensack officials said.

Garrett said the partnership plans on working with the Economic Development Authority to explore all funding avenues.

Though the Hackensack-Seton Hall venture will be the state's first private medical school, Christie noted that it follows the lead of other successful partnerships, such as the Cooper Medical School of Rowan University in Camden and the Rutgers-UMDNJ merger.

The school will offer programs in numerous disciplines, but will have an emphasis on producing doctors in areas of acute need (primary care, general surgery, OB/GYN) in an effort to combat the projected shortfall of doctors in New Jersey and around the country.

Physicians and other health officials from the announced merger of Hackensack-Meridian Health Network will be a large part of the faculty. And while Hackensack University Medical

Center figures to be the most heavily represented (due to its size and proximity to the location), officials from all 11 of the hospitals in the still-being-approved merger will be used. All 11 entities will become teaching hospitals.

Seton Hall is working on plans to relocate its School of Nursing and its School of Applied Medical Sciences to the facility.

This includes its programs in Physician Assistance, Athletic Training, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Speech and Language Pathology along with a Master's in Health Administration and a Ph.D. in Health Sciences (research).

The move, still being worked on, would open up more space on the school's main South Orange campus and also open up more room in its programs.

“If I had the space, I could increase enrollment in our allied health programs by 20 percent without any dip in the level of admissions,” Esteban previously told NJBIZ.

Creating a world-class research facility is a main goal — one made possible by the millions of dollars of state-of-the-art and ready-to-go research rooms already on the campus, thanks to Roche's more than 80 years at the site.

Garrett said he is hopeful that both big and little pharma companies in the state will be encouraged to participate and collaborate. And he would welcome working with more universities, as well, noting Hackensack already collaborates in research with Georgetown, a school he indicated would have interest in relocating some researchers to the area.

In addition to creating space for research, parts of the property likely will be developed for housing and a hotel, as well as some small retail.

The involved parties will look toward the spring to sign a definitive agreement and then, while construction begins to retrofit the existing facilities and potentially build some others, the groups will work to obtain the necessary accreditations to open a school — a process that figures to last at least a year, into summer 2016.

At the same time, the parties involved will be working on setting up the logistics of the school: hiring a dean and a preclinical faculty, developing a curriculum and all things associated with student life, including selecting the first class.

“I think we're on course,” Pascrell said. “I think this is a plus-plus for all of us.”

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## **Health care industry reacts to news of medical school**

Health care experts statewide welcomed the news that New Jersey is on track to get a new medical school:

**Ray Saputelli**, executive vice president  
*New Jersey Academy of Family Physicians*

“We are encouraged that this new medical school will have a social conscience and focus on New Jersey’s future workforce demands, especially our acute need for primary care specialties, which traditionally includes family medicine, general internal medicine and general pediatrics.”

**Betsy Ryan**, chief executive  
*New Jersey Hospital Association*

“This new venture also illustrates how important health care is to the New Jersey economy. Its location in the former Roche campus will fill a void in that community and provide a much-needed economic boost. The Association of American Medical Colleges reports that New Jersey teaching hospitals and medical schools had a total economic impact of more than \$15.4 billion, with nearly 95,000 jobs directly and indirectly attributable to New Jersey’s medical schools and teaching hospitals.”

**Dean J. Paranicas**, chief executive  
*HealthCare Institute of New Jersey*

“This is a win/win for all involved. It benefits the economy of the state, medical education, the health care community, the life sciences community and, most important, ultimately, patients. It will certainly reinforce New Jersey’s leadership in the life sciences and in our view is further evidence that New Jersey remains the medicine chest of the world.”

**Christine Stearns**, VP health, legal affairs  
*New Jersey Business & Industry Association*

“A great health care delivery system is certainly something the employer community needs. We want the highest quality care, and the most efficient care, and having well-trained physicians is one component of a great health care system.

“A healthy workforce is important to employers. It impacts their ability to operate a business and also contributes to the quality of life, which is important to employers and companies looking to locate in the state.”

**John Sarno**, president  
*Employers Association of New Jersey*

“What we are seeing is the emergence of New Jersey as a leader in health care innovation. I believe that the medical school will quickly become a center for medical training excellence and will attract medical students from around the world.”

**Ray Castro**, chief policy analyst  
*New Jersey Policy Perspective*

“This is great news for New Jersey economically as well as for improving health care. There is no question that health services will continue to be one of the biggest opportunities for creating more jobs, so it is important that the state get on the bandwagon early on.” — Beth Fitzgerald

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### **The land of white elephants**

Economic developers across the state were cheering the announced plans for the Roche headquarters that straddles Nutley and Clifton.

John Boyd Jr., principal of Princeton-based Boyd Co., said the plan is “just what the doctor ordered for that facility and, indeed, the northern New Jersey economy.”

Boyd says that, not only will the school complement New Jersey’s health care and medical technology-driven economy, but it will also “add to the state’s intellectual capital,” which he says is “still one of its trump cards in the tug of war among states for new jobs and corporate investment.”

The question is: Can it be copied elsewhere?

New Jersey has the largest concentration of unused and outdated suburban office space in the country, according to Boyd. While he notes that the school may indeed be a “game-changer” of sorts for that particular property, it unfortunately doesn’t offer a model for replication elsewhere.

“The Nutley campus of the pharma giant is just one of several large ‘white elephant’ suburban office complexes in the state crying out for redevelopment,” Boyd said.

That “white elephant” was born back in 2012, when Roche announced its plans to leave New Jersey and close its campus.

But to the company’s credit, Roche worked proactively to make the site more attractive, demolishing unnecessary buildings and focusing on situating it for health care purposes. — *Andrew George*