GHS, Clemson become partners

Agreement aims for more federal research money, officials say

By Liv Osby
Staff writer
losby@greenvillenews.com

Clemson University and Greenville Health System announced a partnership Tuesday that officials say is aimed at attracting more federal funding for medical research and improving health care.

The agreement also is being touted as a catalyst for new business start-ups and job creation in the region.

Under the arrangement, Clemson will be the primary research collaborator for GHS, responsible for administering all of its scientific studies, Dr. Spence Taylor, vice president for academics at GHS, told GreenvilleOnline.com.

Joining the two entities will create an academic health center that is more attractive to the National Institutes of Health and other federal funders, he said.

About half of all NIH funding goes to the (existing) 100 academic health centers, so we were always... behind the eight ball," Taylor said. "This makes us very very competitive for research funding. We're really excited about the possibilities."

"This will open doors for us," added Clemson President Jim Barker.

Clemson and GHS have partnered on health care research since 1990, Barker said, adding the two are involved in $6 million worth of research now. But that's expected to double in four years through the formal collaboration, he said.

The arrangement means that GHS will serve as the laboratory for Clemson researchers to find better ways of delivering health care by tackling issues of access, quality and affordabili-

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ty, he said.

And through development of new biomedical devices and techniques, it's also expected to lead to spin-off businesses that will mean additional jobs in the region, Barker said.

Taylor said every dollar invested in an academic health center reaps $2.50 to $3 for the local economy.

"We probably get calls once a week around economic development opportunities that want to be attached to this academic health center, and we just haven't had the infrastructure to be able to accommodate them," he said. "This will help us do that."

Barker said the collaboration should in-



GHS CEO Michael Riordan said the partnership with Clemson could be a catalyst for new business start-ups and more jobs in the region. KEN OSBURN/STAFF

crease the number of students interested in health careers and support faculty recruitment in health fields. It also will help both institutions save money by avoiding costly duplication of services, he said.

"They were administering their research, putting their teams together, and we were doing it too," he said.

"This is a great opportunity for them to focus on what they do best, which is running a great hospital, and for us to focus on what we do best, which is research."

Initially, research will focus on practical solutions to health care problems, innovative diagnostic tools, increasing patient mobility, novel cancer treatments, and medical devices designed to improve patient care.

"By working together, we will create a research engine that will accelerate improvements in the quality of health care and serve as an incubator of new ideas and initiatives," said GHS CEO Michael Riordan.

"Simply put, we are leveraging resources in order to accomplish more than any one of us could do by ourselves."