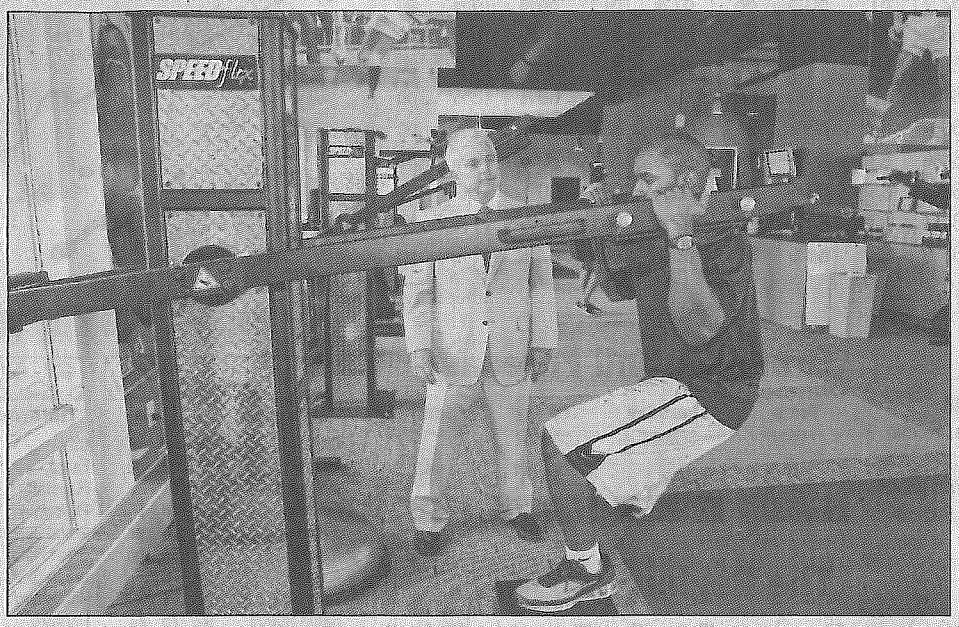
WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 2009 THE GREENVILLE NEWS



OWEN RILEY JR. / Staff

Travis Morris works out in the Speed Flex Innovation Center at the Steadman Hawkins Clinic of the Carolinas in Greenville Tuesday as Dr. James Silliman watches.

Research center to create jobs in Upstate

By Liv Osby
HEALTH WRITER
losby@greenvillenews.com

A North Carolina medical research company has given $5 million to establish a Center of Economic Excellence in Greenville and Columbia that would bring jobs to the state while researching new treatments for orthopedic conditions.

The $5 million from Smith & Nephew Biologics & Spine of Raleigh-Durham was given to the University of South Carolina, the Steadman Hawkins Clinic of the Carolinas, and the Orthopaedic Research Foundation of the Carolinas.

It will be matched by $5 million in state lottery funds as part of the state endowed chairs program to create the Center for Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Sciences, USC President Harris Pastides said Monday.

"This center will create groundbreaking research on the prevention and treatment of orthopedic injuries and disorders," he said, "and spin off start-up companies, industries that will come to South Carolina or be created in South Carolina, expanding employment opportunities in health sciences research, training and education."

The center should generate 25 jobs initially, but have the potential to add at least dozens more, and possibly even more through the development of a "cottage industry" of R&D companies that locate here, he said.

Pastides said the money comes at a time when the state is battling double-digit unemployment, and acknowledged that the CoEE program, developed to stimulate the state's economy, has been criticized for not attracting enough private investment.

Ken Reali, senior vice president and general manager of Smith & Nephew, said the partnership is the first of its kind in orthopedics, as well as a launching pad for the company's new biologics venture.

Pastides said that although Smith & Nephew will benefit from development of biologics from the partnership, such as products derived from a patient's own cells to grow bone, that USC is a public university and must be open to competitors.

"The fact that they funded it does not make this a closed shop," he said. "For every Smith & Nephew, there are 10 global companies like them. And if we do good enough work, if we publish it, patent our discoveries, they're going to come to us as well.

Steadman Hawkins founder Dr. Richard Hawkins said that Greenville Hospital System, which owns the orthopedic clinic, has facilities in place to further the clinical aspects of the research.

The partners now hope to recruit "a world-class researcher from around the U.S. or anywhere on the planet" as endowed chair to lead the center, Pastides said.

"This is a great day for Greenville and South Carolina," he said.