

# Michael F. Sorrell Center for Health Science Education: A New Era in Medical Education

Step inside the Michael F. Sorrell Center for Health Science Education and the thought will cross your mind: Perhaps I should have gone to medical school. Those who already did will simply wish they had studied in such aesthetic- and technology-rich classrooms. Others making the journey toward a health professions career – including this fall’s 130 first-year medical students – will be inspired by the size and scope of UNMC’s newest gem.

The technologically sophisticated building -- the first true home for the College of Medicine -- features clinical skills laboratories that resemble hospital and exam rooms, large amphitheatres with theater-sized screens, flexible space that can be tailored to teaching needs and interactive study rooms, amidst dozens of private study spaces.

“It’s a first-class facility that will help recruit top students locally and nationally, lure award-winning faculty to campus and improve patient/physician interactions,” said John Gollan, M.D., Ph.D., dean of the UNMC College of Medicine. “It also will further enhance the collegial spirit and teamwork between health care providers, which is so important in caring for today’s patients.”

Discussions of a new educational building began almost 10 years ago after a task force studied how best to support 21st century medical education. The committee determined their dream building would:

- Support the type of curriculum UNMC was offering, which included small group interactions of 10 to 15 students and a faculty member -- an approach adopted by UNMC in the early 1990s;
- Support growing trends to educate different types of health care professionals together; and
- Take advantage of sophisticated, state-of-the-art technology, but reflect the continued importance of face-to-face mentoring.

Community philanthropists and UNMC alumni supported the vision and turned a \$52.7 million dream into reality. The greatest challenge, said Ron Schaefer, director of planning and construction in UNMC’s Facilities Management and Planning, was designing a structure that facilitates learning in the 21st century and builds the academic community.

Nestled in a steep hillside, the Sorrell Center accents UNMC’s strategic goal of organizing the Omaha campus into academic, clinical and research areas. The 134,183-square-foot center anchors the academic section of the campus, which is defined by a concentration of educational buildings, the Student Life Center and student apartments to the east. These three areas embody campus planning efforts, Schaefer said, and provide a clear direction for growth and convenient services for constituents, whether researchers, patients or students



Located on the north side of Sorrell, the student plaza will serve all UNMC students.



High-tech amphitheatres provide a rich environment for learning.



Patient simulators help students hone clinical skills.

parents or students.

“The academic buildings will be connected by the new student plaza, as well as additional green space and pedestrian pathways, and bring the look and feel of a professional campus,” Schaefer said. “Building the heart of the academic campus was important and the Sorrell Center will clearly define where academic education takes place.”

The Sorrell Center is unique in that it will be the first building on campus to be certified by LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), a voluntary, consensus-based national standard for developing high-performance, sustainable buildings. “Energy conscious design has been evolving over the past 35 years and the Sorrell Center takes advantage of that knowledge,” Schaefer said.

With the LEED certification, the Sorrell Center meets high green building and performance measures, which translates into lower operating costs, a facility that is environmentally responsible and a healthier environment for occupants.

“Medical school is a challenging experience and the building itself -- in terms of its design, openness and the way it’s been architecturally constructed -- is inspiring,” said James Linder, M.D., who began planning for the building when serving as interim dean of the College of Medicine from 1998 to 2000. Today, Dr.

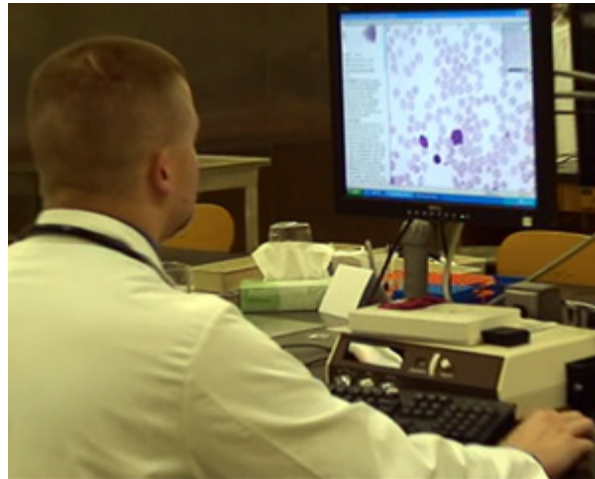
Linder is president and CEO of UNeMed, the licensing arm for UNMC. He and his wife, Karen Linder, are among the benefactors who contributed to the building. “Students and faculty will feel good about being there,” Dr. Linder said. “Students learn more in a bright open design than in a closet. The design is inspirational and helps the whole psychological aspect of education.”

Student amenities were high priorities in designing the building, said Gerald “Jay” Moore, M.D., senior associate dean for academic affairs for the College of Medicine. “We have a considerable number of student study spaces of different formats to improve the education milieu,” he said. But, the Sorrell Center -- which serves as UNMC’s front door -- ultimately, benefits Nebraska patients, young and old.

“Students will be better prepared by being able to simulate clinical care settings made through the design and technology of the building,” Dr. Linder said. “The first time they do a procedure on a live patient, they already will have done it on a computer-assisted mannequin.”

Dr. Gollan said the facility promotes greater interaction between health care professionals, which will foster teamwork and improve the overall quality of care delivered to patients. Its rich technology infrastructure will enable faculty members to take advantage of the most modern teaching methods and help administrators recruit Nebraska’s best students.

“Upon its opening, it will be one of the most advanced medical education buildings in the country,” Dr. Linder said. “The Sorrell Center has a stature that conveys professionalism, so students realize the importance of the education they are receiving.”



**Computers and digital images have replaced traditional microscopes.**