

UA Cancer Center, St. Joe's detail Phoenix plans

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The University of Arizona Cancer Center and St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center have solidified plans for a new \$135 million cancer treatment and research complex in Phoenix.

Originally, when UA planned to build a cancer center on the Phoenix Biomedical Campus several years ago, Banner Health agreed to be its partner. But the deal broke off because the two parties couldn't agree on Banner's financial contributions. Now a new deal has been worked out with Banner's rival, St. Joseph's, which is owned by San Francisco-based Catholic Healthcare West .

The Arizona Board of Regents, which oversees UA, endorsed the affiliation at its Dec. 2 meeting in Tucson. It approves financing for the construction of the \$135 million cancer facility. Construction of the 250,000-square-foot outpatient clinic on the northwest corner of Filmore and Seventh streets on the Phoenix Biomedical Campus is set to begin in 2012.

UA and St. Joseph's have been talking about the center for more than a year.

The Arizona Board of Regents specified in its vote Friday that the project cost can be no higher than \$135 million, and that the project is to be capitalized solely by gifts, municipal or other government contributions and new debt.

Of the \$135 million construction costs, \$50 million is expected to be raised by philanthropy, said Dr. Tom Brown, COO of the UA Cancer Center and professor of medicine at UA. The city of Phoenix already has committed \$14 million that would be used for additional costs.

Brown said he also is working on naming rights to the building, which would go toward the fundraising efforts.

"We don't have that gift identified yet," he said. "We have a number of possibilities."

The naming donor likely would be an individual or private philanthropist, but he said he is not ruling out a corporate sponsorship.

UA and St. Joe's will work together to recruit 20 to 30 cancer specialists as well as cancer researchers to support clinical trials, said Linda Hunt, CEO of St. Joseph's and senior vice president of operations for CHW's Arizona market. She said St. Joe's has committed to recruiting 10 physicians immediately.

"But we're also recruiting community physicians to become integral partners in this center," she said.

Hunt said it is too early to determine exactly how much money St. Joe's will put toward the development of the new outpatient center. It depends on how much space St. Joe's takes within that new clinic.

"Right now, the programmatic piece would be our piece of the investment," she said.

As part of the deal, all inpatient cancer care will be handled at St. Joe's, and the outpatient treatments will be offered at the new cancer facility on the Phoenix Biomedical Campus.

"We really are going to be the new front door for the cancer center," Hunt said.

Brown said UA eventually will partner with several hospitals.

"We ended up with the conclusion that St. Joe's-CHW was the best partner for the UA Cancer Center, based on it having some elements of a strong cancer program," he said. "They do have a substantial community-based cancer center platform that includes research activities, patient education and patient clinical services."

Hunt said this agreement comes at a perfect time, as Arizona celebrates its centennial early next year. Both organizations are more than 100 years old. UA was founded in 1885 and St. Joe's was founded in 1895.

"Both of our organizations were here before statehood and have had a long-standing commitment to this state," she said.