



(Above) The \$80 million College of Medicine building is slated to open in 2022.

(Right) "Now the real work begins," says Founding Dean Dr. Stephen Spann.

# FIRST CLASS

## New UH Medical School Approved to Enroll Students

BY ERIC GERBER

**T**he University of Houston's College of Medicine is ready to teach its first class of medical students.

After receiving preliminary accreditation from the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME), the new medical school announced it will start its first class of 30 students July 20, with each aspiring physician being supported by a \$100,000 philanthropic scholarship to underwrite tuition and fees for four years.

At full enrollment, within the decade, the medical school will have 480 students.

Plans for a medical school go back to 2014 when UH President Renu Khator began initial efforts to develop an institution that would help address the shortage of 4,800-plus primary care physicians in Texas, which ranks 47th out of 50 states in primary care physician-to-population ratio. The goal for the new school is for 50% of graduates to

choose primary care specialties including family medicine, general internal medicine and general pediatrics.

"We are extremely grateful to receive LCME accreditation, but now the real work begins. We want to be accountable for improving the overall health and health care of the region," said Dr. Stephen Spann, founding dean of the medical school.

The Health 2 Building in the UH Medical District will serve as the college's temporary home for the first two years. The facility is equipped with a state-of-the-art gross anatomy lab, clinical skills lab, practice patient examination rooms and large classrooms for team-based learning. A new \$80 million College of Medicine building will be constructed on campus, across from nearby MacGregor Park, as part of a future Life Sciences Complex. Groundbreaking is expected later this summer with completion in 2022.

The medical school will follow an innovative curriculum that emphasizes community and population health, primary care, behavioral and mental health, and preventive medicine. Students will consistently and longitudinally be exposed to primary care settings and practice. For example, the household-centered care program will pair an inter-professional

student team with a family living in an underserved community throughout the four years of the curriculum. And because of the significant need to increase the number of physicians practicing in rural areas, students will be required to participate in a four-week clinical learning experience in rural Texas.

To help support and guide its operations, the medical school has forged a number of key partnerships, including relationships with HCA Houston, Humana and Blue Cross and Blue Shield, which recently donated \$5 million to the school for scholarships and to develop a pipeline for students from diverse backgrounds with an interest in primary care medicine. 