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Medical school may get funds

Money would help train professionals to serve in rural areas

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ROCKFORD — The University of Illinois College of Medicine at Rockford stands to gain \$400,000 in federal funds toward efforts to expand training for health-care professionals in rural communities.

The money is part of a 2004 spending bill that Congress is expected to vote on in coming weeks. The funds would help the college build a \$24 million facility that will house the National Center for Rural Health Professions on the college's Parkview Avenue campus.

The money comes on top of

\$1.5 million in federal funding announced in February by U.S. Rep. Don Manzullo, R-Egan.

The college of medicine "is one of the few schools in the country and in the world that provides a rural medical curriculum," said Manzullo, who pushed for additional money to be included in the bill.

"This funding will improve the health care for rural Americans. It will also boost Rockford's status as a leader in medical training and treatment in America."

In October, the medical college received \$6.4 million from the National Institutes of Health to use toward rural

medical research and training.

A fund-raising campaign for the rest of money needed for the project is planned to start in 2004. The college also will continue seeking federal and state funding.

The college's major focus is becoming a leader in rural health research and public policy analysis. It also looks to train a larger pool of health-care professionals for rural Illinois counties.

Illinois ranks eighth among the 50 states for shortages of health professionals. About 75 percent of the state's rural counties are medically underserved.



Don
Manzullo



Bernard
Salafsky

The medical college already trains doctors, nurses, public health professionals and pharmacists for practice in rural communities. It wants to add classes for dentists, social workers, physical therapists and nutritionists.

Rural training for post-graduate resident doctors will

begin in July at KSB Hospital in Dixon, the first program of its kind in the state.

"Mr. Manzullo's vision has been a committed supporter of the College of Medicine because I believe he understands the value the college brings to the greater Rockford community," said Bernard Salafsky, college dean. "We are most appreciative."

The rural medicine program has been training doctors since 1993 and graduated 55 students. Of those, 60 percent are practicing in rural areas.

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