The University of South Florida has launched an ambitious building project to change the face of the Health Sciences Center and transform how its graduates care for patients. More than 300 people today gathered for a festive groundbreaking ceremony. Packing into a big white tent on the north lawn of the College of Nursing, they celebrated the beginning of a modern new headquarters for nursing education.

The $14-million, 77,000 square-foot College of Nursing will double the size of the existing facility and create a front door to the Health Sciences Center. It is the nursing school's first major expansion and renovation in its 30-year history.

Funded primarily by appropriations from the state's PECO budget, the new College of Nursing building is also supported by $750,000 gift from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida, matched by the state for a total of $1.5 million, and a $500,000 gift in memory of George and Marian Miller.

"We are poised to be in the top tier of nursing programs in the country," said USF President Judy Genshaft. "The College of Nursing has doubled its enrollment in the last two years and doubled its research funding in the past year. This new building will continue that momentum by doubling the College's education and research space for students and faculty."

"This spectacular new home will be a model for 21st century nursing education - one that helps us attract and retain the best and brightest students at a time when the nursing shortage is severely impacting the level of patient care," said Patricia Burns, PhD, FAAN, dean of the College of Nursing. "It will build on our integrated approach to advanced health care education that encourages students to learn in teams."

The second building, scheduled to break ground next year, will feature an ambulatory surgery and medical center with a patient support library. A third phase of the building project, beginning in 2006, will completely renovate the current USF Medical Clinic to include a center for training primary care physicians and nurses.

"Our faculty in medicine, nursing and public health faculty have developed a blueprint for the future of integrated health care. Inside these new buildings and across our community, we will work together to transform the way health care is taught and delivered," said Robert M. Daugherty, MD, PhD, dean of the College of Medicine and Vice President for Health Sciences. "We believe that by changing the learning journey for our students, we will change the medical journey for our patients."

Visitors to the new College of Nursing will step into a two-story galleria entrance - the new "front door" to the Health Sciences Center - that welcomes students, faculty and patients as it connects the nursing school with the College of Medicine and the USF Medical Clinic. The new facility will include state-of-the-art smart classrooms connecting students and faculty to affiliate
hospitals and other clinical sites. A virtual learning center will include life-size robotic patients programmed with life-and-death scenarios in real time.

The centerpiece of the three-story complex will be a national model for health care training - a Center for Integrated Learning - that brings together nursing and medical students to develop and test their clinical skills. Students who learn from one another as team members are more likely to work together once they enter practice, Dr. Daugherty said. "This collaboration will inspire care that heals, empowers and achieves the best outcome for patients and their families."

Architects designing the College of Nursing and other Health Sciences Center buildings are Alfonso/NBBJ JV. Ajax Building Corporation is the construction management firm for the project.

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The College of Nursing at the University of South Florida Health Sciences Center is deeply integrating students into real-world care to anchor them in the nursing profession. The College forged a clinical collaborative with Tampa Bay’s leading health care providers to offer students "home base hospitals" with one- to-one mentoring for state-of-the-practice education. Funding for research has nearly doubled during the last year, and the College strives to be in the country’s Top 20 for federal research funding by 2008. Research teams are focusing on palliative and end of life care, cardiac rehabilitation, and complementary therapies for chronic illness and cancer. The College offers baccalaureate, masters and doctoral programs.

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