

Sisolak's budget gives shot in arm to new UNLV medical school campus



An artist rendering of the new UNLV School of Medicine that is under construction (Courtesy: University of Nevada, Las Vegas)

LAS VEGAS (KSNV) — Over the summer, Nevada had to cut about \$1 billion from the existing state budget. One of the casualties was money for a new med school campus on Shadow Lane, in the heart of downtown Las Vegas' medical district.

Before they broke ground on October 29th, the building hit a big speed bump over the summer: because of Nevada's COVID-caused economic collapse, the state had to rescind its \$25 million contribution to the roughly \$150 million project, part of a huge billion-dollar budget cut.

The October groundbreaking was an act of faith, built on the \$150 million in private donations for the project, and the hope the state would eventually come through with the money. It did.

This week, the governor's proposed budget restores the state's contribution, which is not a small amount.

“Well, relief, and excitement,” says Maureen Schafer, the president and CEO of Nevada Health and Bioscience Corporation, the private, donor-backed organization that is building the campus.

Technically, the governor's budget is just a proposal that needs to make it through the gauntlet of a 120-day legislative session, which begins February 1st. Schafer tells me she's hopeful the \$25 million stays in. In her corner, the governor, who has made clear a new med school campus is a priority.

“Having him do that sends a message to the legislature that it's important,” says Schafer.

The 135,000 square foot building will be the new home for a medical school that wants to get bigger.

Now four years old, it has 240 students.

Noyan Ramazani is one of them. He tells me a new campus will be a big boost.

“I think it's great. More space, more study rooms, more room for us to get into groups and go over material, especially with anatomy labs and things like that,” says Ramazani.

Beyond that, it will create jobs, and attract businesses, say its supporters.

“Doctors make you feel better, but that sector really invigorates communities,” says Maureen Schafer.

The new campus is scheduled to be finished in 2022. Officials say construction is running ahead of schedule.

