**Press Release**

**For Immediate Release**

**June 7, 2021**

**FranU Receives Approval to Build Heart of its Campus, St. Francis Hall**

*Building to be Ready in Time of Centennial Celebration*

**Baton Rouge, LA** -- Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University (FranU) received approval to move forward on its first major building project in the history of the University. The 75,000 square foot, three-story building will be dedicated to better accommodate student learning and development at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

St. Francis Hall represents the initial step in the development of the University’s campus master plan. Located at the corner of Brittany and Picardy Avenues, this important building will serve as the front door to a cohesive and identifiable campus.

Dr. Tina Holland, President and CEO of the University expressed gratitude to the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System for granting the necessary approvals at a critical time, stating “We thank our Franciscan ministry partners for approving this important project. It comes at a crucial time for the University, our Health System and the community, especially given the intense demand for our graduates, both in the clinical and non-clinical professions. This is an historical development for FranU as we prepare to celebrate the institution’s centennial in 2023.”

The University began in 1923 as a school of nursing with the purpose of serving the workforce needs of Our Lady of the Lake, its affiliated hospital. The original school of nursing has grown to become a university that educates and forms service-minded professionals in a broad array of high-demand fields. FranU, with an enrollment of just under 1,400 students, has accommodated growth by adapting old medical office buildings to serve educational purposes. Today, the University occupies 12 renovated clinics and office buildings scattered throughout the Baton Rouge Health District. During this past academic year, in response enrollment growth and social distancing mandates, FranU leased additional instructional space in the Catholic Life Center from the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

Veteran member of the FranU Board of Trustees and retired neurosurgeon, Dr. Tom Flynn, stated, “This has been a long time coming.  The need for a true campus for our students has been discussed for many years, and it’s good to see this important step for the University.  I am proud of the mission of the University and look forward to seeing how the beginning of the master plan will bring even more opportunities for the students we educate and form, who go on to serve our community.”

Driven by the University’s mission, the facility will provide an interactive and student-centered environment. The building will contain modular spaces that can support multiple educational activities and social events of varied sizes. Learning outside of the classroom will be facilitated by interactive student spaces adjacent to instructional spaces, promoting ongoing synergies between formal and informal learning and enhancing the relationship-based education characteristic of a Franciscan university.

When discussing the $28 million project, Craig Netterville, chair of the board of trustees, noted, “The University is a highly disciplined steward of resources, carefully monitoring its investments, controlling operational expenses and ensuring the highest quality preparation of graduates in critical professions. As the largest single provider of healthcare professionals in the greater Baton Rouge area, this building is an essential investment, not just in the University but in our broader community as well.”

St Francis Hall will support FranU’s ongoing expertise in experiential learning with simulation suites that re-create patient-centered clinical environments, including high-fidelity rooms, standardized patients and multi-bed skills labs. Flexible and adaptable classrooms, team rooms and labs for project-based, interdisciplinary and interprofessional learning will help to prepare graduates for healthcare delivery methods that improve outcomes and reduce healthcare costs.

Scott Wester, president of Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center and member of the University Board of Trustees, highlighted the importance of the project to healthcare workforce development. “Healthcare is constantly evolving, and FranU stays in front of new developments with state of the art technology and teaching strategies. St. Francis Hall will provide a dynamic and flexible physical environment to better accommodate ongoing advancements in healthcare education.”

FranU addresses Louisiana’s growing demands for healthcare professionals through highly focused workforce development efforts. The University has established partnerships with employers, secondary schools and Louisiana’s public two-year college system in an effort to create a well-defined set of professional and educational pathways at all levels of education, both public and private. These partnerships are aligned with high-growth occupations, especially in healthcare, and are helping to alleviate talent pipeline shortages from certificate through doctoral levels. FranU graduates fill high need positions throughout the state, and the University is a net importer of healthcare professionals to Louisiana.

“This initial building is named St. Francis Hall in honor of our founders and the University’s namesake, the Franciscan Missionaries of our Lady. We are privileged to advance the mission of FranU as we preserve the rich Franciscan tradition of our Sisters,” concluded Holland.

Groundbreaking is expected at the end of summer 2021.

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