



Atrium Health, Wake Forest Baptist Health and Wake Forest University Announce Intent to Create Transformative Academic Healthcare System

Three visionary organizations plan medical school of the future in Charlotte and enhanced research and innovation core in Winston-Salem to improve health for tens of thousands of patients

CHARLOTTE, N.C., & WINSTON-SALEM, N.C., April 10, 2019 – Atrium Health, Wake Forest Baptist Health and Wake Forest University today announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding to create a next-generation academic healthcare system. This enables three visionary healthcare organizations to invest in the health and well-being of people throughout the region, as well as contribute ground-breaking research and innovation to the world. Included in the announcement are plans to build on the excellence of Wake Forest School of Medicine and develop a second state-of-the-art campus in Charlotte. By signing a Memorandum of Understanding, the organizations have agreed to start a period of exclusive negotiations, with the goal of entering into a final agreement later this year.

With a shared vision to further transform medical education, expand patient-centered research and innovation currently in place in Winston-Salem, and empower the next generation of clinical excellence, the three organizations are embracing the opportunity to revolutionize how people become and stay healthy, ultimately enriching countless lives and communities throughout North Carolina, the Southeast region and the nation.

Best Care for All

Today, Atrium Health is known as one of the most highly integrated not-for-profit healthcare systems in the nation with nearly 14 million patient interactions each year across 42 hospitals and more than 900 care locations. Wake Forest Baptist Health is a nationally-ranked academic medical center and regional healthcare system with 2.2 million patient interactions each year across seven hospitals and more than 400 care locations.

“Phenomenal things can happen when like-minded partners, committed to the same transformative vision, come together in new ways to better serve our patients and communities,” said Eugene A. Woods, president and CEO of Atrium Health. “For example, Wake Forest School of Medicine and Wake Forest Baptist Health are national leaders in studying how to help people age better, and with a much higher quality of life. Last year at Atrium Health, we cared for more than 350,000 patients over the age of 65, and by 2035, one in five U.S. residents will be over that age. Just imagine the powerful possibilities to advance modern medicine by linking breakthrough science directly with our patients in a way that significantly enhances their cognitive and physical functioning – and allows them to live independently for longer. This is just one of the unlimited opportunities we see ahead. We can truly transform healthcare throughout North Carolina and far beyond – one patient at a time and one community at a time.”

Together, these innovative organizations have an unprecedented opportunity to create a world-class healthcare system around a single mission, strategy and set of goals designed for one purpose – to continuously improve health for all communities they serve, from large cities to small rural communities, making care more accessible and affordable for the nearly 6.8 million residents near the systems’ respective service areas. A combined organization would:

- Bring together Atrium Health’s destination clinical programs such as Cancer, Children’s, Heart and Musculoskeletal, along with Wake Forest Baptist Health’s clinical leadership and differentiating research in Aging and Alzheimer’s disease, Cancer, Cardiovascular disease, Diabetes and Obesity, Neurosciences and Regenerative Medicine;
- Transform health for communities served through innovative data and evidence-driven public health programs, value-based care models that improve social determinants of health, and next generation primary care experiences that seek to dramatically improve and maintain health and well-being; and

- Invest in a proposed Translational Research and Population Health Center in Winston-Salem, to accelerate the best possible practices for patients, while improving quality and making care more affordable for all, including drawing from the experience and track record of CHES, the organizations' population health services company.

A Next-Generation Medical School

Today, Wake Forest Baptist Health is a nationally-ranked academic medical center, which works as one with the School of Medicine. As one of the nation's most selective medical training programs, Wake Forest School of Medicine receives more than 10,700 applications for 145 Doctor of Medicine positions each year, in addition to having top programs for Physician Assistants, Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists and Doctor of Nursing Practice. Atrium Health's medical education programs are centered on continuity of relationships with patients, faculty, peers and the community. With a unique integration of educational programs with Atrium Health's medical group, learners have the rare opportunity to hone in on evidence-based care, affordability initiatives, as well as leading quality and patient safety best practices, as they partner with their patients across the care continuum.

"This is an exciting prospect that will have positive state and national impacts in addition to benefitting the Charlotte and Winston-Salem communities," said Nathan O. Hatch, Ph.D., president of Wake Forest University. "By strengthening medical education in Winston-Salem and bringing a medical school to Charlotte, we will open many doors for future health care leaders and also play a nationally leading role in research."

Together, these three learning organizations would create a distinguished environment to redefine physician training with a cutting-edge curriculum that develops focused skillsets to best support the future of medical care. This unique approach would connect patients, caregivers, clinicians, academics, students, entrepreneurs and future leaders, encouraging them to work in concert to expand modern and affordable treatment options, to alleviate barriers to care and to solve many of the most pressing healthcare issues of our time. Building on the momentum of the recently opened Wake Forest Bowman Gray Center for Medical Education in Winston-Salem's Innovation Quarter, the organization would begin to envision a second innovative campus in Charlotte over the next few years. A combined organization would:

- Educate nearly 3,200 total healthcare learners – including students, residents and fellows across more than 100 specialized training programs each year;
- Attract top medical education faculty to enhance innovative teaching methods and create new models of care, adding to the already 1,650 full-time and part-time faculty positions at Wake Forest School of Medicine and Atrium Health; and
- Offer the largest post-graduate fellowship program for Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants in the nation, as well as critical experience for medical student education throughout an integrated academic healthcare system.

Patient-Centered Research and Innovation

Today, Wake Forest School of Medicine is among the top U.S. academic medical centers, with more than \$210 million in annual research funding from the National Institutes of Health and other external sources. Committed to addressing our nation's most challenging healthcare needs, the school focuses its research portfolio on six areas: Aging and Alzheimer's disease, Cancer, Cardiovascular disease, Diabetes and Obesity, Neurosciences and Regenerative Medicine. Atrium Health currently has more than 1,000 active studies underway across more than 50 sites of care, and an active research portfolio that has grown nearly 40 percent over the previous two years.

"We are eager to bring this shared vision for our future to life with Atrium Health," said Julie Ann Freischlag, M.D., CEO of Wake Forest Baptist Health and dean of Wake Forest School of Medicine. "It's incredible to think about the impact we can make, together, advancing patient-centered research, a next-generation curriculum and active population health analytics across our combined footprint. We can create amazing outcomes that embrace true change – most importantly enhancing, extending and saving the lives of countless people."

Together, these innovative organizations would have the remarkable ability to fuel new scientific discoveries through the advancement of large-scale research within the settings where patients are already receiving care. A combined organization would:

- Coordinate many large and ground-breaking multi-site clinical research collaborations around the U.S. that are affecting millions of lives today, such as the Systolic Blood Pressure Intervention Trial (SPRINT), the Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis (MESA), the Search for Diabetes in Youth (SEARCH) and POINTER, a U.S. study to protect brain health through lifestyle intervention;
- Care for over 340,000 patients struggling with cardiovascular disease, and nearly 1.4 million North Carolinians in rural areas of our state. By uniting each organization's research and clinical strengths, the new organization would have national rankings by *U.S. News & World Report* in seven Adult specialties and six Pediatric specialties; and
- Work toward growing scientific and analytics jobs in the Winston-Salem area.

Over the next several months, Atrium Health, Wake Forest Baptist Health and Wake Forest University will diligently work together and explore the opportunities to enhance services, capabilities and drive greater efficiencies. More information about the proposed next-generation academic health system can be found at www.BestCareforAll.org.

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Atrium Health Contact

Chris Berger
(704) 631-0951
chris.berger@atriumhealth.org

**Wake Forest Baptist Health
Contact**

Paula Faria
(336) 716-1279
pfaria@wakehealth.edu

**Wake Forest University
Contact**

Brett Eaton
(336) 758-5237
eatonbd@wfu.edu