



Roane State, TCAT Knoxville and Covenant Health announce partnership for new Knox Regional Health Science and Simulation Center

Knoxville, Tenn. (February 8, 2021) – Roane State Community College, the Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) Knoxville and Covenant Health are pleased to announce a partnership that will bring a state-of-the-art healthcare training facility to East Tennessee.

On January 31, Governor Bill Lee presented his 2022-23 budget proposal, which included a request for \$67,500,000 in state funding for the Knox Regional Health Science and Simulation Center. The facility will enable instructors to provide comprehensive simulations of the work students will be doing when they graduate, in settings similar to clinics and hospitals.

The project had previously been approved by the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR), the governing body for both Roane State and TCAT Knoxville. It was then recommended by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) for inclusion in the budget request. Roane State is expected to provide at least a \$6,500,000 campus match. In addition to the \$1,000,000 already appropriated in fiscal year 2021-22 for the preliminary design phase, this brings the total estimated dollar amount for the project to \$75,000,000.

The center is meant to replace Roane State's current Knox County Center for Health Sciences, a 16,000-square-foot campus currently located at 132 Hayfield Road in West Knoxville, and will be the new home of TCAT Knoxville's health science programs. As proposed, the Knox Regional Health Science and Simulation Center would have 130,000 square feet in total, with at least 11,000 square feet devoted to the simulation center.

Plans are to construct the facility in West Knoxville on land gifted by Covenant Health, the region's most comprehensive healthcare delivery system. The parcel is located near Parkwest Medical Center, one of the area's premier hospitals and a member of Covenant Health. The land contribution is contingent on the project's full budgetary approval.

"Our Knox County Campus has served us well, but we are landlocked in that space and our programs have no room for growth," explained Roane State President Dr. Chris Whaley. "Expanding to meet local workforce needs in health science careers is a top priority. With the help of our partners at Covenant Health and multiple other partners we've engaged as part of this effort, we can increase the number of students accepted into our nationally accredited programs, add new specialized courses and provide a one-of-a-kind educational experience that prepares students for the real world. We look forward to working with members of the General Assembly on final funding for this important project."

"This is an exciting partnership for Covenant Health. Educating the healthcare professionals of tomorrow is a vital part of caring for our communities, and we're very proud of our collaborative clinical training initiatives with more than a dozen colleges and universities, including Roane State," said Jim VanderSteeg, Covenant Health president and CEO. "We're pleased to donate the land for the new health science and simulation

center, which will bring innovative resources to a greater number of students and prepare them for success in their healthcare careers.”

Current Roane State programs served by the new simulation center will include nursing, EMS, polysomnography and respiratory therapy, with the college planning to add new programs such as cardiovascular technology, healthcare administration, fire science, public health, ultrasound and more. TCAT Knoxville’s health science programs will be offered under the same roof, including dental assisting, phlebotomy and surgical technology, among others.

“I’m delighted that TCAT Knoxville can join with Roane State in this project, which will benefit the health science and allied health students of both our institutions for generations to come,” TCAT Knoxville President Kelli Chaney said. “Healthcare is critical to the people of East Tennessee, and a steady supply of highly skilled and trained professionals is crucial to both the care of patients and the success of the industry. This project will increase that supply, and give students great new career opportunities in health professions in high demand. It will also free up space on our campus for other career and technical programs. It’s a win-win-win for all.”

Mike Belbeck, executive vice president of operations for Covenant Health, agreed. “This partnership will create a unique synergy between classroom studies and hands-on experience for students in our region. Students will have the convenience of attending classes at the new center and participating in clinical training opportunities right across the street at Parkwest Medical Center, as well as other Covenant Health facilities,” he noted.

The governor’s 2022-23 budget proposal is now being reviewed and considered by the state legislature. Once fully funded and approved, Roane State, Covenant Health and TCAT Knoxville hope to have the facility open for students within three years.

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About Roane State: *Roane State is a two-year college providing transfer programs, career-preparation programs and continuing education. Founded in 1971, the college has locations in Roane, Campbell, Cumberland, Fentress, Knox, Loudon, Morgan, and Scott counties as well as a branch campus in Oak Ridge. For more information, visit roanestate.edu or call (865) 882-4554. Remember, eligible adults can now attend Roane State tuition-free with the Reconnect grant. Learn more: roanestate.edu/reconnect.*

About Tennessee College of Applied Technology – Knoxville (TCAT): The Tennessee College of Applied Technology Knoxville designs and offers programs that are responsive to local business and industry needs. Established in 1963, the college has locations in Knox County, extension campus at Anderson County Higher Education Center as well as instructional service centers at Blount Memorial Hospital and Oak Ridge High School. For more information, visit tcatknoxville.edu or call (865) 546-5567.

About Covenant Health: *Covenant Health is a Knoxville-based healthcare delivery system that provides comprehensive services in Tennessee and cares for more than 2 million patients each year. The health system includes 10 hospitals; outpatient services and clinics; specialized behavioral, oncology, and rehabilitation services; home care, physician practices and community programs. With more than 11,000 employees, physicians and volunteers, Covenant Health is the area’s largest employer and has been recognized seven times as a Best Employer by Forbes. Learn more at CovenantHealth.com.*