JCHS Cuts Ribbon on New Campus

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It’s really not new but has been a work in progress, with students and faculty making the move over time. With the project now complete, the Jefferson College of Health Sciences saw fit to hold a ribbon cutting last week. The migration to the renovated Carilion Community Hospital has included many updates — rooms and labs that once housed patients are now offices and classrooms.

Jefferson College of Health Sciences President Dr. N.L. Bishop called the new campus “the culmination of nearly a decade of visioning.” He lauded Carilion CEO Dr. Ed Murphy for putting together a strategic team that set the wheels in motion. Part of the process included moving most of the services at Community Hospital over to Roanoke Memorial, although an Urgent Care center and a physical therapy wing remains.

“Since 2006,” said Bishop, “the college slowly began occupying space at Community.” More than 1000 students and faculty now are based at what he termed “state of the art classrooms and labs … with breathtaking views.”

Murphy said the Carilion Clinic system was not just a hospital, saying “we are an academic health center.” The goal of Jefferson College he added was to “bring bright, talented health care professionals … to the community.” Murphy liked the idea of a “vibrant, academic health center,” with smart students “asking hard questions.”

It’s all about “an environment of service to the community,” he added just before the ribbon was cut, with administrators, faculty and students doing the honors. “This is another step along the way [for Carilion], an important one,” said Murphy, but “not the last.”

There are 13 undergraduate and three graduate programs at the school, with 130 on the faculty staff according to one school official. Students come from as far away as Alaska and California and getting accepted is a competitive process.

First year student Cornelius Powell, an Army veteran, is also the college Student Senate chair. “To say that this is a definite upgrade is an understatement,” he said during brief remarks. “We are very grateful for an opportunity to learn in this remodeled building.”

Ryan Brush is a student in the biomedical sciences program at the school, which now focuses on bachelor’s degrees in nursing and other health care fields. He was also a student at the old JCHS building right down the block, which did not logistically offer the chance for much interaction between students in different programs. “The [new] space is really nice – it allows for mingling,” said Brush. “It’s much brighter and you have these amazing views of the valley.”

Brush commended the faculty for “making the best of it,” at the old campus, which is also owned by Carilion Clinic. “It was kind of dim and clustered. It’s just great to be over here,” said Brush, who wants to go on to medical school after graduation.

Scott Hill, Dean of Student Affairs, was one of those leading tours of the new campus after the ribbon cutting. “It’s a tremendous increase in our laboratory [space]. They’ve been purpose-built for students. “We [also] left some of the equipment in place so it still has the feel of a hospital.”

Hill, a four-year employee of the school, appreciates the move: “it’s a [more] positive attitude with a more modern setting. I think it’s a great draw for students looking to come here. We’re very happy.”
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