

Halfway there: Beam signing marks milestone for Shreiber veterinary school, Virtua Health College Research Center

September 9, 2024

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Rowan University President Ali A. Houshmand addresses audience members at the beam signing ceremony for the Shreiber School of Veterinary Medicine and the Virtua Health College Research Center. Rowan's largest academic facility, the building is rising on Rowan's 300-acre West Campus.



What was once a peach orchard is becoming a \$176 million hub for health education and innovation on Rowan University's West Campus.

On Sept. 9, leaders from Rowan University, Virtua Health, state and local officials, students and community members came together to mark the ceremonial halfway point in the construction of the future home of the New Jersey's first veterinary school—the Shreiber School of Veterinary Medicine—and the Virtua Health College Research Center.

Watch a video recap of the event [here](#).

Brown markers in hand, attendees signed the final, seven-foot, 300-pound steel beam that will rise on the framework of the 162,000-square-foot facility, which sits on a 300-acre tract in

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Harrison Township, a mile east of Rowan's Main Campus in Glassboro.

The largest academic facility on the University's eight campuses, the building will include space for the veterinary school's classrooms, a teaching hospital with clinical services to serve the community and research and diagnostic labs.

To expand Rowan's rapidly growing research activity—the University is quickly approaching Research 1 Carnegie Classification—the Virtua Health College Research Center will include open, modular laboratories, collaboration space and support facilities in the building's four-story tower.

Researchers from Rowan-Virtua School of Translational Biomedical Engineering & Sciences of Rowan University (TBES) will collaborate with teams from within Virtua Health College of Medicine & Life Sciences, partners from other Rowan colleges and schools, and institutions and industries from the region, nation and around the globe.

Established in 2021, Virtua Health College of Medicine & Life Sciences is a historic academic partnership between Rowan and Virtua Health, South Jersey's largest health system. The partnership includes TBES, the Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine and the Rowan-Virtua Rita & Larry Salva School of Nursing & Health Professions.

Vital partnerships

In addressing the standing-room-only crowd gathered in the area of the construction site that will become the atrium of the building, Rowan President Ali A. Houshmand emphasized that such a massive project wouldn't happen without strong partners committed to advancing the education and economy of the South Jersey region.

"One word to describe this is partnerships," Houshmand said as he thanked the University's partners, including Virtua Health, led by CEO and President Dennis Pullin; Congressman Donald Norcross; Assemblyman Louis Greenwald; State Sen. Troy Singleton; State Sen. John Burzichelli; Rowan Board of Trustees members, led by chairman Chad Bruner; former State Senate President Steve Sweeney; and South Jersey businessman and entrepreneur Gerry Shreiber, whose \$30 million gift to the institution is supporting scholarships to veterinary students.

Shreiber, who was the first to sign the beam along with his wife, Melanie, "is an entrepreneur who used his phenomenal business success as a springboard to help others, particularly Rowan students," Houshmand said. "We are grateful for the support of the Shreiber family and for their confidence in what we can accomplish together."

In November 2021, the New Jersey Legislature approved \$75 million to construct the veterinary school's primary academic and clinical facility. In 2022, Virtua Health made a philanthropic investment of \$85 million and Rowan committed \$125 million to

create the academic health partnership to advance medical, nursing and health care professions education, research and care.

Norcross noted that the Higher Education Restructuring Act, passed in 2013, established Rowan as the state's third public research institution. Before its passage, South Jersey higher education was "historically underfunded," Norcross said.

"Working together is how we got to the vision we see here today," Norcross said.

A top 100 university, Rowan is the nation's third fastest-growing public research institution as recognized by The Chronicle of Higher Education.

"Rowan University—much like Virtua Health—has evolved and expanded considerably in recent years. This campus reflects the growth, and more importantly, the pursuit of greatness," Pullin said.

"I believe it speaks well of an institution when it refuses to rest on its reputation and instead focuses more on the future and looking ahead. You will see, and you can see, what's ahead of us."

Matthew Edson, founding dean of the Shreiber School of Veterinary Medicine, and faculty members will welcome the inaugural class of 70 students to campus next August, pending approval from the American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education. Enrollment is expected to eventually grow to 90 students annually.

"We're signing this beam today and, in 11 short months, we will have our first DVM class. That's really extraordinary," Edson said.

"When they get here, we have phenomenal plans for a really innovative curriculum. One of the things we want to do is make sure that, when they start here, they learn to be a doctor with hands-on experience from Day One. Our teaching hospital is going to be a phenomenal resource for the community. We don't have a lot of access here in South Jersey for emergency care, for specialty care."

'The progress has been amazing'

Future veterinary students now enrolled in the 3+4 Accelerated BS-to-DVM Pathway Program, a collaboration between the veterinary school and Rowan's College of Science & Mathematics, joined together to sign the beam, adding a few messages of hope as well. Among them were Erin Maegerle, Morgan Hoiberg and Kayla Bhagaloo, all currently sophomore biological sciences majors pursuing the Bantivoglio Honors Concentration in the John H. Martinson Honors College.

"Future patients thank you," Maegerle wrote, adding in hearts, dog and cat drawings and a "Thank you, Mom" message.

"I drew a little heart," added Hoiberg. "I wanted to show my love for the school."

Bhagaloo, who, once she earns her DVM, wants to help animals in her father's home country of Trinidad, said she's excited about the construction progress.

"It's happening so fast. The progress has been amazing," she said.

The facility was designed by Erdy McHenry Architecture. LF Driscoll is the construction manager. The Gloucester County Improvement Authority is the project developer.

When the veterinary school opens, Rowan will become only the second institution in the nation with three medical schools offering DVM, M.D. and D.O. degrees.

Bruner noted that Rowan's future West Campus expansion will include an advanced manufacturing hub; the new home of the Rowan-Virtua Rita & Larry Salva School of Nursing & Health Professions; and a holistic wellness village.

"We are extremely proud of our administration's hard work and dedication to Rowan's smart growth strategies...focusing on the future needs of our students," Bruner said.



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