

Bringing a Health Center to Florida- 1930s and 1940s

Florida thus offered limited options for training health care practitioners and students who wished to become physicians or dentists had to compete for limited out-of-state spaces. Agitation for opening colleges of Dentistry and Medicine began in the 1940s. At first, citizens opposed the project because of projected costs.

Doctor Watson Urges State Medical School



Dr. Herman Watson, Lakeland surgeon and founder of the Watson clinic, yesterday asked his voice to the appeal by Florida doctors for establishment of a medical school in Florida.

"We have got to have more doctors in rural areas," he said, "and we are not going to get them unless we have a state medical school. We should start building this school now. It will take approximately two years to build, equip and staff a medical school."

He directed attention to Florida's low educational rating and expressed the opinion that the proposed medical school would not hamper any program the citizens, communities or education may have worked out.

"On the other hand, it will aid that program," he said.

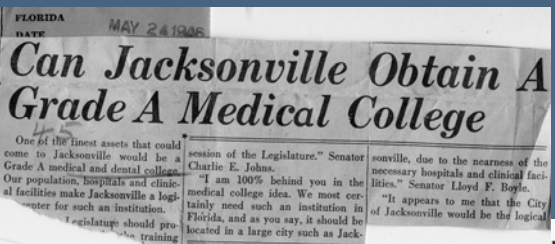
His complete statement follows: "There is a definite shortage of doctors in rural communities and small towns throughout the entire state of Florida, and there are rural communities who have been served by medical men throughout their professional lifetime and who are now becoming older and will not be able to serve their communities many more years. When the time arrives when these men have to give up their practices — by death or physical infirmities — the communities are going to be without a doctor. For the residents of other states who come to Florida to practice are not considering small communities."

"Lakeland is about as small a community as any of them will consider. I could name several communities that within a very few years will probably be, also."

Rotary Endorses Move To Obtain Medical College

If action taken here Wednesday by the Starke Rotary Club is any indication of sentiment throughout the state, the Florida Legislature will have a clear mandate to appropriate funds for the establishment of a medical school in Florida.

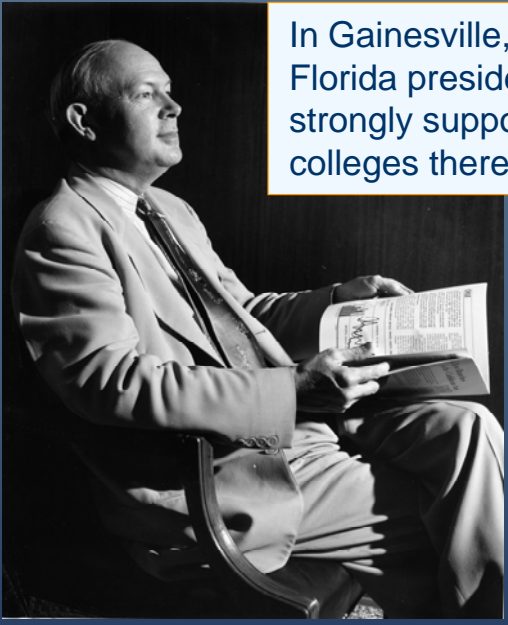
In a resolution, unanimously adopted at its Wednesday luncheon meeting, the Club recognized the need for a medical college and, in effect, said: "Let's have one, even if the cost is great. Expense cannot be considered when the future of the medical profession in Florida is threatened because our young men cannot enter overcrowded out-of-state medical colleges, and we have none of our own."



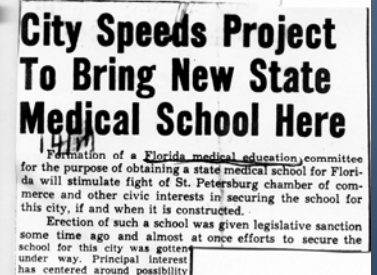
A STATEMENT
From the Trustees of the
UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI
Regarding It's Proposed
Medical School

After a publicity campaign, run largely by physicians such as Cason and Watson, the public agreed, "Let's have one, even if the cost is great. Expense cannot be considered when the future of the medical profession in Florida is threatened." March 28, 1947

Once citizens recognized the need for a medical and dental school, disagreement arose as to the best place to locate them. Large cities such as Tampa/St Pete, Miami and Jacksonville argued that they had the right mix of population and hospitals.



In Gainesville, then University of Florida president J .Hillis Miller strongly supported bringing the colleges there.



With Floridians unable to reach an agreement over the location of the medical and dental schools, the legislature called for a study by an unbiased committee in 1947. In 1948 a commission headed by physician Vernon Lippard began a study to determine the ideal site for the state schools. In 1949 the Lippard reported recommended Gainesville because of its central location and University.

