



LOCAL LAWMAKERS ADDRESS FIRST YEAR STUDENTS AT S-I-U SCHOOL OF DENTAL MEDICINE

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\$4.1 Million In State Construction Money To Expand Facilities And A Healthcare Grant Discusse

(Alton) Two local lawmakers Tuesday said they are working for the release of state approved construction funds and grants for disadvantaged adults to receive dental care to help S-I-U School of Dental Medicine students gain invaluable experience to prepare them for a career as dentists.

State Senator Bill Haine (D-Alton) and State Representative Dan Beiser (D-Alton) made their remarks during an annual seminar sponsored by the American Dental Association and the Illinois State Dental Society for freshman dental students at the Alton based S-I-U facility.

"The legislature and the Governor have already approved \$4.1 million in state construction dollars to build a new facility for a Simulation Laboratory (Sim Lab) at the Alton location," Haine said. "The school has worked hard to make this project happen by raising the majority of the \$10.6 million total project cost, but right now the state approved money is still pending release with the Illinois Capital Development Board."

"Senator Haine and myself have been working for the release of these funds for this project. A project that is key in the teaching of these dental students," Beiser said. "The Sim Lab allows first and second year dental students to get vital experience before beginning to work on live patients. That's why this facility is so vitally important to the students and the dental school at S-I-U."

Both lawmakers also talked of the great need to find replacement funding for the adults who lost dental coverage in the state Medicaid budget cuts earlier this year and they are exploring the possibilities of grants to the state's two dental schools to fill the gap.

"We are investigating the possibility of grants from the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) to the dental schools at both S-I-U and the University of Illinois," Beiser said. "When these adults lost their dental coverage they end up going to the emergency room, which actually costs the state more money, in fact as much as 10 times more. And, those with an abscess or needing an extraction get referred to a dentist for treatment anyway. Financially for the state it doesn't make sense."

"A grant like this could be a win-win-win situation for the state, for the adults who lost their coverage and for the dental students and programs at S-I-U and U of I," Haine said. "There comes a time when all medical professionals have to work on live humans and these dental students need to have as much experience as possible so they are prepared to go out into the real world as practicing dentists. Grants to these two schools to provide dental care to those who do not qualify for state coverage but also cannot afford insurance can go a long way to help everyone all the way around."

According to the school's website, the S-I-U School of Dental Medicine is the only dental school within 250 miles of St. Louis. The forty year old school has trained over 1600 dentists. Other information on the dental school is available at www.siue.edu/dentalmedicine.