



Anatomy of a Dream: The Making of FIU Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine, 2006-2016

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Florida International University Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine (FIU HWCOC) was established in 2006 at a time when the nation was bracing for a critical shortage of physicians, but the dream to create the medical school had begun many years before. In 1989, FIU Vice Provost for Research Thomas A. Breslin, PhD, launched a formal campaign to develop a medical school as a means to further FIU's recognition as a research university. However, there was little appetite for this idea at the time, and the effort stalled amidst nationwide concerns of a predicted "doctor glut." But the predictions and the tide changed and, despite some early resistance even within the university, when experts called for an expansion of US medical schools in the 1990s, plans for a new medical school at FIU were already underway. Among the early dreamers and staunchest medical school supporters were then-FIU President Modesto A. Maidique, PhD; philanthropist Herbert A. Wertheim, OD DSc; and many local physicians and hospital administrators, who would eventually travel to meetings of the Board of Governors of the State University System of Florida to convince the Board that FIU should have a college of medicine. In 2009, after what has been described as a "lucky aligning of the stars," the dream became a reality. Forty-three students with dreams of their own donned their first white coats as the college's inaugural class embarked on a pioneering journey in the new medical school.

Many people over many years had worked tirelessly to make it happen. Anatomy of a Dream, The Making of Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine is a personal dissection of their efforts told by some of the key players in their own words. It is a story of creation and creativity. Led by the vision of Founding Dean John A. Rock, MD, and Dr. Herbert Wertheim, for whom the college was named, FIU HWCOC set out to develop a unique twenty-first-century approach to medical education and to transform the future of health care in South Florida. The Green Family Foundation NeighborhoodHELP™ (Health Education Learning Program), the signature component of the college's doctor of medicine degree program, is recognized nationally and has been commended by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education as "a model for providing medical students with the opportunity to experience the interface of societal problems with medical care and to impact community health." In only ten years since its founding—seven since opening its doors to students—FIU HWCOC is delivering on its promise to transform health care and medical education.

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