



## A proposal to the City of Joplin from Missouri Southern State University to support the Health Science Innovation Center

*June 2022*

Missouri Southern State University, one of Joplin's largest employers with an annual economic impact of nearly \$300 million, submits the following proposal to the Joplin City Council. The timing of the city's receipt of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, the university's development of a transformational academic facility, and the state's investment in matching dollars results in this once-in-a-generation opportunity for these three entities to partner in filling one of Joplin's most important workforce needs.

### JOPLIN'S ECONOMIC STRENGTH

Since the decline of the mining industry in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Joplin has built a diversified economy. Today, for example, manufacturing and transportation/distribution are mainstays of Joplin's economy. However, no sector provides Joplin the economic impact of healthcare. Home to two major medical centers and hundreds of related enterprises, healthcare forms the backbone of Joplin's economy. Several factors make healthcare an economic powerhouse for Joplin: thousands of high-paying professional and service jobs, significant local spending, and hundreds of thousands of visitors drawn each year to Joplin for health services, nearly all of whom make local purchases that result in tax income for the city. Given these and other factors, it's easy to see how healthcare is Joplin's most important economic sector.

### A CRITICAL WORKFORCE GAP

With all its economic strengths, the Achilles heel of the healthcare industry is its ability to attract and retain talent. Nearly every healthcare business in the region, including major employers Freeman and Mercy, has indicated a critical need for professionals such as nurses, techs, and respiratory therapists, to name but a few. As point of evidence of this demand, a search of the job site *Indeed* on Monday, June 27, 2022, showed 619 openings for nurses within 25 miles of Joplin.

The ability of Joplin and the region to continue to capitalize on its strength as a healthcare provider depends largely on its ability to meet that industry's local workforce demands. Missouri Southern, for example, established its nursing program in 1966 following the closure of the St. John's Hospital School of Nursing. History has proven in the last 56 years that homegrown nursing talent is more likely to be retained than nurses recruited from across the country. MSSU's ability to produce nurses is currently limited to an annual cohort of 30 graduates. Assisting entities such as Missouri Southern in increasing their capacity to meet the workforce demands in critical sectors like healthcare must be a top priority for the City of Joplin and the State of Missouri.

## A TRANSFORMATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

To that end, Missouri Southern proposes the creation of a \$30 million “best in class” facility to strengthen the university’s position as a leader in health science education (*most notably the preparation of nurses, dental hygienists, respiratory therapists, radiologists, and pre-professionals such as future doctors, dentists, and physical therapists*). The Health Science Innovation Center will contain state-of-the-art teaching and training facilities, including a large simulation hospital, expanded cadaver lab, radiologic technology laboratory, and research facilities for students, faculty, and university partners, including Kansas City University.



The construction and equipping of the Health Science Innovation Center will increase both the quality and number of graduates in the university’s health science programs. More health science graduates from Missouri Southern means the region’s healthcare providers can better meet the growing demand for services. This will have a direct impact the region’s economic vitality and quality of life. For example, the construction of the Health Science Innovation Center will allow Missouri Southern to double the number of nursing graduates annually (from 30 to 60) by 2024 (pending approval of the State Board of Nursing), with additional growth possible.

## LEVERAGING STATE INVESTMENT

The Health Science Innovation Center at MSSU is one of the top capital projects identified by Governor Mike Parson for its impact on Missouri. A \$15 million appropriation from the Missouri General Assembly awaits the governor’s signature later this month. Once approved, those funds can be accessed by Missouri Southern on a dollar-for-dollar match using investments by governmental bodies (*cities and counties*), private foundations, individual donors, and others. These match funds mean every dollar invested by the City of Joplin yields two for this project and immediately moves the Health Science Innovation Center closer to becoming a reality for healthcare in Southwest Missouri.

## LONG-TERM ECONOMIC IMPACT

During a strategic planning workshop in November 2020, the Joplin City Council established six priorities for the community:

- 1) Improve the community's appearance;
- 2) Address declining neighborhoods;
- 3) Increase economic opportunities;
- 4) Address homelessness;
- 5) Reduce crime & increase safety; and
- 6) Create and grow resilient revenue for city government.

While the City of Joplin has put forward an ambitious plan, it is priority #3 - robust economic growth (*jobs, sale of goods and services, and the resulting tax income for the city*) – that will go the farthest in funding the achievement of the other five priorities. As a soon to be “shovel ready” initiative, the Health Science Innovation Center is poised to feed the long-term economic growth of Joplin's healthcare sector and, therefore, make a significant economic impact on the city.

The impact of the Health Science Innovation Center will be measured by the increased production of graduates prepared to immediately take high-demand roles in the health sciences. Missouri Southern has worked closely with Freeman Health System, Mercy Hospital-Joplin, and other regional healthcare providers to identify workforce gaps that are inhibiting our economy's growth in this important sector. For example, out of workforce conversations with the two local hospitals was born Missouri Southern's bachelor's degree in healthcare administration and, coming soon, a master's degree within the same field. Graduates in these programs (*both undergraduate and graduate*) will have an immediate impact on the non-clinical business side of healthcare – something both hospitals said is of critical importance to their long-term growth.

## ELIGIBLE USE OF ARPA FUNDS

Both the Missouri Governor's Office and the Office of Administration have put forward an American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) “toolkit” to assist local governments in determining the eligible use of funds. The toolkit lists six categories of eligible use:

- Public health (*includes “enhancement of healthcare capacity”*);
- Public safety;
- Economic development (*includes “access to health and social services”*);
- Water, wastewater, and stormwater;
- Broadband; and
- Behavioral health.

Missouri Southern's Health Science Innovation Center fits both the “public health” and “economic development” categories and, therefore, is an eligible and encouraged use of ARPA funds. A decision by the Joplin City Council to invest ARPA funds in this project will have a multi-generational impact on the health of and economic opportunity for the city's residents.

## THE OPPORTUNITY AND TIMELINE

Missouri Southern respectfully requests the City of Joplin invest \$1.5 million in ARPA funds in the construction of the Health Science Innovation Center. The state's match of an additional \$1.5 million will result in a \$3 million infusion for the project. These early investments in the project will allow the university to contract with an architect and begin the final design of the project.

If all funds are received for the project in 2022, construction can begin in mid-2023 and the building occupied by the end of 2024 – potentially graduating its first expanded cohort of nurses, (*pending approval by the State Board of Nursing*) by May 2027. These new graduates will have an immediate impact on Joplin's effort to grow the healthcare sector within its economy.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about Missouri Southern's plans for the Health Science Innovation Center and how this project will positively impact Joplin's future, please contact:

- Dr. Dean Van Galen  
President  
Missouri Southern State University  
  
Office: (417) 625-9501  
Cell: (715) 307-8299
- Dr. Brad Hodson  
Executive Vice President  
Missouri Southern State University  
  
Office: (417) 625-3072  
Cell: (620) 232-4208



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