

Contact

Chris McFadden
212-229-6145
cmcfadden@tcco.com

University of Kentucky Hosts Ceremonial Topping Out of New Rankin Health Education Building

Topping out ceremony highlights collaboration between the University, state leaders, and Turner Construction in building Kentucky's future of health care.

August 29, 2025 – **University of Kentucky** leadership, state leaders and **Turner Construction Company** hosted a ceremonial “topping out” celebration for UK’s new **Michael D. Rankin MD Health Education Building**. The building will house programs in the colleges of Medicine, Public Health, Health Sciences and Nursing as well as the Center for Interprofessional and Community Health Education.

[Construction began October 2023](#) on the 509,000-square-foot facility located at the intersection of University and Huguelet Drives. “Topping out” is the construction term used to indicate that the final steel beam is being placed on the building, and topping out ceremonies are a symbolic milestone that celebrates the building’s progress and the hard work put in by the construction and design teams. UK alumni, faculty, staff and students from the health colleges had the chance to sign the beam prior to the ceremony.

“Today’s milestone is about more than steel and concrete — it represents our unwavering commitment to the health of Kentucky,” said UK President **Eli Capilouto**. “This structure rising behind us is a symbol of collaboration and progress, and it represents the future of health care for our state. It is here that students from across disciplines will come together to train, solve problems and discover solutions that make health care stronger for every community in our Commonwealth.”

The ambitious project was authorized by the 2022 Kentucky General Assembly, who allocated \$430 million for the construction of the facility and is providing \$250 million in state bonds for the project. The construction phase was approved by the UK Board of Trustees in June 2023.

“The General Assembly’s decision to authorize \$430 million for this project, including \$250 million in state bonds, is a clear investment in Kentucky’s future,” said Senate President **Robert Stivers**. “This facility will expand training for thousands of health care professionals each year, directly addressing shortages that affect nearly every county in our Commonwealth. It’s a long-term commitment that will strengthen health care access, improve community well-being and support economic growth for decades to come.”

One of the greatest challenges facing the Commonwealth is the current and growing shortage of health care providers, including physicians, nurses, physician assistants, physical therapists, athletic trainers, medical laboratory scientists, speech language pathologists, audiologists, public health officials and other health care professionals. These shortages are especially prominent in rural areas.

Addressing this health care workforce shortage is paramount to the mission of the University of Kentucky, and the new facility will give the university an important means in solving this concerning issue. This larger, best-in-class

space will increase UK's training capacity by up to 1,200 students, which translates to more health professionals armed with the skills to create a healthier Kentucky for all.

Currently, 77% of the space will be dedicated to academic, shared and collaborative spaces for students and faculty, including 25% devoted to classrooms and learning labs and 34% for simulation and experiential learning.

The new Rankin Health Education Building will allow for substantial growth, including:

- The College of Medicine will expand its medical education program in Lexington from approximately 138 students per year to up to 200 students per year, a 44% increase in enrollment capacity. This gives the UK College of Medicine an overall enrollment of more than 1,000 medical students across all its campuses, making it one of the largest medical schools in the country.
- It will also enable the College of Nursing to significantly increase enrollment in its traditional Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) and Advanced BSN programs in order to address the statewide nursing shortage.
- The new facility will allow the College of Health Sciences to increase enrollment by 30% with more than 460 students across 10 professional programs. Included in the Rankin Health Education Building will be physical therapy, physician assistant studies, communication sciences and disorders, athletic training and clinical nutrition, medical laboratory science, and the rehabilitation and health sciences Ph.D. program, along with additional new academic programs.
- The College of Public Health will expand enrollment by 50%, focusing on expanding undergraduate pathways to prepare future public health and health provider professionals. This strategic growth will address critical workforce needs and provide students with enhanced opportunities to pursue careers dedicated to improving community health.
- The Center for Interprofessional and Community Health Education, which helps develop an effective and collaborative health workforce for Kentucky and beyond, will be able to impact 50% more students annually who will be prepared to provide quality team-based care as professionals.

In addition to its aesthetically pleasing design, the Rankin Health Education Building was created with function in mind, promoting collaboration among the colleges along with flexible, student-centric spaces. Shared hallways, classrooms, educational labs and spaces will advance the exchange of ideas, knowledge and perspectives, leading to research studies, development of new treatment approaches and implementation of evidence-based practices that improve patient outcomes. For example, medical, health science and nursing students will be able to simulate real-life, patient-based experiences through the standardized patient program.

"The topping out of the Michael D. Rankin Health Education Building marks more than a construction milestone — it's a celebration of collaboration, purpose and pride," said **David Opalka**, vice president and construction executive for Turner Construction Company. "Every beam and slab was placed with intention, creating spaces designed not just for beauty, but for function, flexibility and the future of health care education in Kentucky. Thank you to our entire project team, design partners and tradespeople, whose dedication and craftsmanship brought this vision to life. Together, we've built more than a structure — we've built a foundation for the breakthroughs and learning that will shape tomorrow."

###

About Turner Construction Company

Our vision is to be the highest value provider of construction services. We deliver our services on complex and challenging building projects of all types and sizes throughout North America and in 30 countries around the world.

We seek to create a healthy, prosperous, and sustainable future for our people, clients, partners, and the planet. We have earned a reputation for integrity, working safely, and driving innovation. With a focus on creating an environment where people can be at their best, be authentic, and be treated with respect and dignity, the company is widely recognized as a great place to work. The firm is a subsidiary of HOCHTIEF, an engineering-led global infrastructure solutions provider with leading positions in North America, Australia and Europe and a rapidly expanding presence in high-tech, energy transition and sustainable infrastructure markets. To learn more about Turner visit www.turnerconstruction.com.