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## UC's College of Medicine is at risk

*By Dr. David Stern*

Great American cities have great medical schools. They add tremendously to the quality of life of their communities by providing cutting-edge health care, discovery-driven medicine, a steady flow of new physicians and an influx of outstanding physician-scientists from around the world. Cincinnati is no different.

Our city has been fortunate to have such a medical school - now rated in the top third of all in the U.S. - for nearly 200 years. It's the second-oldest public medical school in the country.

Medical schools have a substantial impact on local economies. The UC College of Medicine attracts \$137 million in research funding. The college and University Hospital have a \$1.2 billion annual economic impact, and are responsible for more than 15,700 jobs in our community.

Sadly, I believe this region's College of Medicine is at risk due to the impending breakup of the Health Alliance, the health system that supports the missions of the UC College of Medicine and University Hospital.

The proposed sale of Jewish Hospital by Dec. 31 would remove it from the Health Alliance. Fort Hamilton Hospital also has indicated that it will leave the Alliance. This likely will end the Health Alliance and could, in turn, diminish the College of Medicine.

Having University Hospital as part of an integrated health system has allowed it to continue its historic mission of caring for our community's sickest, most severely injured and most socioeconomically disadvantaged residents. It will be difficult if not impossible for University Hospital to fully accomplish its mission of care to all without the support of a healthy system. The doctors of the College of Medicine and staff at University Hospital have embraced this mission for almost two centuries and we must do everything possible to preserve it.

The demise of the Health Alliance will have a domino effect on the College of Medicine and its physician practice. The hospital provides nearly \$50 million annually for services from University of Cincinnati Physicians and to support medical education and research. Without it we could lose some of our best clinicians, scientists and teachers. Recruitment of new faculty also will likely suffer.

More than half of the doctors in our region were educated or trained at UC. We are eager to continue that same level of service to our community.

We are working diligently to find suitable new partners for University Hospital and the College of Medicine. However, time is running short and we all could benefit from additional time to form new relationships.

I call on community members, business leaders and the Jewish Foundation to slow the dissolution of the Health Alliance.

This will allow us time to ensure that both University Hospital and the UC College of Medicine develop and implement a solution that will protect and enhance our critical missions and secure the future of health care for all who call our community home.