

Frequently Asked Questions

What does the relationship among Atrium Health, Wake Forest Baptist Health and Wake Forest University mean?

The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding signals the very beginning of in-depth discussions regarding the specific details of what our coming together could ultimately become. We look forward to those discussions and to ultimately reaching an agreement that benefits North Carolina and all of the communities our organizations serve.

Will Atrium Health, Wake Forest Baptist Health and Wake Forest University bring a school of medicine to Charlotte?

Charlotte is one of the largest cities in the country without a top ranked Medical School. The city and surrounding area are forecasted to grow significantly in the coming decades and Wake Forest's ability to extend its quality academic medical talents and services provides for an unparalleled opportunity to strengthen its practices. The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding signals the very beginning of in-depth discussions regarding the specific details of what our coming together could ultimately become. The goal is that upon signing a definitive agreement together, Atrium Health, Wake Forest Baptist Health and Wake Forest University will immediately convene a team to start the work of bringing a modern, innovative, cost-effective and sustainable top 20 school of medicine to the Charlotte area.

When did these discussions start?

As our region's population grows and the healthcare environment continues to change, Atrium Health and Wake Forest Baptist Health are continually looking for new and innovative ways to deliver on our missions. As such, we routinely explore opportunities with like-minded organizations – always with the best interest of our patients in mind. Atrium Health and Wake Forest Baptist Health have been trusted partners in certain business matters, including MedCost, our jointly-held health care management company. Some of these discussions led to where we currently are and how we can better, together, invest in the health and well-being of people throughout the region, as well as contribute ground-breaking research and innovation to the world.

How does this impact our mission and vision to serve the people of North Carolina and all who walk through our doors?

Atrium Health and Wake Forest Baptist Health each have a history of significant impacts on the communities they serve and share a common commitment to improving health in North Carolina by enhancing quality and increasing access to healthcare. The combined, complementary resources and expertise of Atrium Health, Wake Forest Baptist Health and Wake Forest University will enhance affordability and access to services across a broad geographic spectrum by achieving economies of scale and operational efficiency.

Have you set a deadline for completing the negotiations?

The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding signals the very beginning of in-depth discussions regarding the specific details of what our coming together could ultimately become. Though there is no hard deadline, we are hoping to have a definitive agreement and be in a position to start the joint activities by the end of 2019. We are currently doing our due diligence and have a number of details to discuss. This is an extremely exciting development for North Carolina, but we want to make sure we get it right.

What will the new relationship be called?

The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding signals the very beginning of in-depth discussions regarding the specific details of what our coming together could ultimately become. These are part of the discussions that will now be taking place. Both organizations are working together to mutually agree on the naming and branding of the new entity.

Why does Atrium Health want to become an academic medical center?

Atrium Health is known as one of the most highly integrated not-for-profit healthcare systems in the nation with nearly 14 million patient interactions each year across 42 hospitals and more than 900 care locations. Wake Forest Baptist Health is a nationally-ranked academic medical center and regional health care system with 2.2 million patient interactions each year across seven hospitals and more than 400 care locations. Together, these innovative organizations have an unprecedented opportunity to create a world-class healthcare system around a single mission, strategy and set of goals designed for one purpose – to continuously improve health for all communities they serve, from large cities to small rural communities, making care more accessible and affordable for the nearly 6.8 million residents near the systems' respective service areas.

What will happen to the current leadership of Atrium Health, Wake Forest Baptist Health and Wake Forest University?

The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding signals the very beginning of in-depth discussions regarding the specific details of what our coming together could ultimately become. These are part of the discussions that will now be taking place. Until a definitive agreement is in place, Gene Woods will continue to be the president and CEO of Atrium Health, Julie Freischlag will continue as the CEO of Wake Forest Baptist Health, and Dr. Nathan Hatch will remain president of Wake Forest University.

Do Atrium Health and Wake Forest Baptist Health have evidence showing your commitment to effective population health management?

It would be our intent through our relationship to extend the very successful collaboration with CHES (the population health services company historically majority owned by Wake Forest Baptist Health) to a larger geography. CHES has had noteworthy success in accelerating change to lower healthcare costs measured by the Medical Loss Ratio (MLR) – the amount of premium dollars spent on healthcare – from the high 80s to the low 70s reliably over the past three to four years, while maintaining and increasing quality as measured by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and insurance companies. The MLR success has been attained within academic medical centers, community-based hospitals and physician groups. This change translates to tens of millions of dollars savings annually to payers, and ultimately employers and patients/consumers.

Wake Forest Baptist Health is already integrating this thinking into care models throughout their network. This is another example of how by working together we would be able to scale innovative ideas from across both systems that can benefit even more people and make care more affordable for all.

Where can I find more information?

Please visit BestCareforAll.org to view the latest information and send any questions to BestCareForAll@atriumhealth.org.