

EXECUTIVE INSIGHTS: UNIVERSITY HEALTH AND ITS ECONOMIC IMPACT

Jimmy Holmes: Hello, I'm Jimmy Holmes, Market President and Publisher of the San Antonio Business Journal. Welcome back to Executive Insights. Today I'm joined by Ed Banos, President and CEO of University Health, to discuss University Health and its economic impact in San Antonio. Welcome, Ed.

Ed Banos: Thank you, Jimmy.

Jimmy Holmes: To start off, could you give us a brief overview of University Health and your role in the community?

Ed Banos: University Health is the public hospital system for Bexar County. By state designation, we are a hospital district and an academic medical center located in the Medical Center area. We have about 12,000 employees, operate a little over a \$4 billion system, and see roughly 40,000 patient discharges each year. We're a large hospital system with an employed physician practice and a very active academic medical center.

Jimmy Holmes: When people hear "public health system," they might assume it's mostly tax funded. Can you explain where most of your operating dollars come from?

Ed Banos: As a hospital district, we are a taxing district in Bexar County, but only about 15% of our revenue comes from taxes. The majority comes from providing healthcare services and billing insurance.

We do take care of the uninsured and those who need care the most in Bexar County. That is our mission and our commitment. Years ago, we made the decision to care for everyone who needs our services, and the revenue we generate helps offset that commitment while keeping the tax burden as low as possible.

Jimmy Holmes: You've been expanding rapidly across the region. What kind of ripple effect does that have on the local economy?

Ed Banos: The impact is significant. We're currently building two community hospitals, the Retama Hospital and the Palo Alto Hospital, with a combined cost of about \$1.5 billion.

Beyond construction costs, the economic impact comes from job creation, long term growth in those areas, and the expansion of healthcare access. A study by the Perryman Group showed these projects could generate about a \$5 billion economic impact for those communities and for Bexar County overall, through construction, employment, and the ancillary businesses that follow.

Jimmy Holmes: When you look at construction projects and new facilities, how much of that work supports local businesses?

Ed Banos: We're very committed to using local



ED BANOS President and CEO University Health

Ed Banos serves as the President and CEO for University Health. Banos joined in 2015, as the Executive Vice President, Chief Operating Officer and assumed his new role as President and CEO on July 1, 2024.

Ed has more than 30 years of executive health care leadership experience. Prior to joining University Health, he served as president and CEO of Duke Lifepoint Upper Peninsula Health System and CEO of Superior Health Partners in Marquette, Michigan. From 2008 to 2012, he held the position of president and CEO of Good Shepherd Health System in Longview, Texas.

He received his Bachelor of Science degree in Health Records Administration from the University of Pittsburgh and his Master's in Health Service Administration from Armstrong Atlantic State University (now Georgia Southern) in Savannah, Georgia.

Ed is an active member of the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce, a former board member of the San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and a founding member of the South Texas Crisis Collaborative. He was recognized as a Healthcare Hero by the San Antonio Business Journal in 2019.

labor and local expertise whenever possible. Across our projects, about 70% of the work is done by local laborers, tradespeople, construction companies, and architects.

The remaining 30% includes items that simply aren't available locally, such as large medical equipment that must be sourced nationally or globally. But whenever we can use local resources, we do.

Jimmy Holmes: Beyond construction, how does

University Health's growth translate into new jobs and opportunities across the community?

Ed Banos: The Palo Alto Hospital is a great example. It's located in an area that has long been both a healthcare and economic desert. This project is helping bring jobs and development to the south side of San Antonio.

Major employers like Toyota and JCB have told us how important it is to have accessible healthcare for employees who live in that area. We see this as an opportunity to help create a vibrant employment zone, with growth in ancillary businesses, retail, housing, and services. Developments like the VIDA housing project are part of that broader ripple effect tied to both the Retama and Palo Alto hospitals.

Jimmy Holmes: San Antonio is unique in having a locally owned and operated public health system. What does that mean for the community?

Ed Banos: Local ownership and local control are critical. University Health operates its own health plan, Community First Health Plans, which serves more than 160,000 people in Bexar County and surrounding areas.

Because the people making decisions live here, they understand the healthcare needs of this community. Any revenue we generate is reinvested locally, into clinics, employees, new hospitals, and signature programs like our transplant services and Level One pediatric and adult trauma centers. That money stays in Bexar County and supports local priorities.

Jimmy Holmes: You also partner closely with UT Health San Antonio. How does that collaboration strengthen the workforce and the local economy?

Ed Banos: We wouldn't be an academic medical center without UT Health San Antonio. We support more than 850 medical residents, with about 600 dedicated to University Health. That represents roughly a \$75 million annual commitment to medical education.

This partnership ensures we're training future physicians while providing high quality care today. We also support other programs in the community, including the UIW internal medicine residency program. The more residents and faculty we attract, the stronger our healthcare workforce and economy become.

Jimmy Holmes: In recent years, you've opened new centers in historically underserved neighborhoods, which you mentioned earlier. What difference does that make for families who previously lacked access to that kind of care?

Ed Banos: One of the most important things we do at University Health is listen. When we hear directly from our county commissioners, Commissioner Tommy Calvert and Commissioner

Clay Flores, they consistently tell us their communities need better access to healthcare.

Just a few weeks ago, we opened the Wheatley Clinic on the East Side. Working closely with Commissioner Calvert and local community leaders, we learned residents did not have convenient access to care, including ExpressMed services for after hours urgent care.

University Health responded by building that clinic, and we're taking the same approach on the South Side. Our goal is to make sure no one has to travel all the way to the Medical Center just to receive basic healthcare services.

Jimmy Holmes: As you look ahead, how do you see University Health continuing to balance growth with its role as a community anchor?

Ed Banos: Our goal is to make sure everyone in Bexar County, especially the underserved and uninsured, has access to care. That voice must always be part of the conversation.

Whether it's preventive care, specialty services, or simply access to healthcare, University Health is committed to listening and making sure care is available to everyone, not just a select few.

Jimmy Holmes: Last question I always like to leave with is, what's something that our readers and viewers should know that they may not know about, the expertise you have at University Health or some of the specialties that you have?

Ed Banos: For many years, University Health was seen primarily as the public hospital system. While we are committed to caring for the uninsured, we are also a full academic medical center with highly specialized expertise.

If someone needs a liver transplant or another advanced specialty service, nearly all of that care can be provided right here in San Antonio at University Health. Patients don't need to travel to Houston or Dallas for high level care. We have exceptional physicians and nurses who are also training the next generation of healthcare professionals.

Jimmy Holmes: Ed, thank you for your time and insights today. We appreciate the work you do for our community.

Ed Banos: Thank you. It's my pleasure.

Jimmy Holmes: That was Ed Banos, President and CEO of University Health. We'll see you next time on Executive Insights. For more information, visit universityhealth.com.

