After nearly four years of construction, Banner ? University Medical Center Tucson opened its $446 million, nine-story patient tower to the public on April 22.

"Banner has built the Tucson community and the University of Arizona a beautiful new hospital that will be a state-of-the-art learning ground for future generations of UA physicians, nurses and scientists," said UA President Robert C. Robbins. "It's a realization of the promise and potential we envisioned four years ago in our academic affiliation with Banner Health."

The new tower, which features 228 private rooms, 20 operating rooms, new diagnostic imaging and cardiac catheterization labs, a new cafeteria and clear views of Tucson and the Santa Catalina Mountains, aims to provide the most modern and comfortable setting for hospital patients and the best teaching hospital experience for aspiring health professionals.

The tower "will set the standard for health care in Southern Arizona," said Chad Whelan, CEO of Banner ? University Medicine in Tucson. "Now we will have a state-of-the-art hospital as good as our physicians and staff. All private rooms, the latest technology, spectacular views ? it will be a gift to the Tucson community and a stunning training ground for future generations of UA physicians, nurses, pharmacists and scientists."

The hospital's main entrance and lobby have moved to The Pavilion in the new "Tower 1." The main thoroughfare onto the hospital campus is now at East Elm Street and Campbell Avenue. The previous entrance is expected to close permanently. The pediatric inpatient units in Banner ? Diamond Children's Medical Center will remain in their current locations.

The hospital's cafeteria, gift shop and chapel have been relocated to the ground floor of the new tower.

Visit UANews to see a photo gallery of Banner ? UMC Tucson's new tower.

With this 670,000-square-foot tower expansion, Banner ? UMC Tucson's capacity has increased from 479 to 649 licensed beds. The tower's entire fifth floor is devoted to Women's and Infant Services, with 12 light-filled labor and delivery suites and 24 maternity rooms with private bathrooms and showers.

The transition of all existing units in the original hospital into the new tower is expected to be completed over the next month. Labor and delivery, along with three intensive care units, have already moved into Tower 1, with surgery transitioning soon. The new locations for the hospital's units are:
- Floor 1: Main lobby, cafeteria, pharmacy
- Floor 2: Imaging and cardiac services, café
- Floor 3: Surgery
- Floor 4: Mechanical rooms, neurodiagnostics, blood bank, rehabilitation services, central telemetry, respiratory therapy
- Floor 5: Labor and delivery, antepartum/postpartum
- Floor 6: Cardiovascular intermediate/intensive care
- Floor 7: Cardiac progressive care and medical intensive care
- Floor 8: Trauma intermediate care and surgical trauma/burn intensive care
- Floor 9: Specialty intermediate care and surgical intermediate care

The tower, which includes $50 million in new patient care equipment and computer technology, replaces older sections of the original hospital building, which opened in 1971 as University Hospital.

The tower was designed by architects Shepley Bulfinch, engineers AEI and GLHN Architects & Engineers. The lead contractor was Sundt I DPR.

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