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UMW's construction detailed

BY LINDLEY ESTES / THE FREE LANCE-STAR



ROBERT A. MARTIN/THE FREE LANCE-STAR

A University of Mary Washington student walks near Seacobeck Hall near the northern end of where a new student center is under construction. Chandler Hall once stood on the Fredericksburg campus at this site.

The University of Mary Washington's board of visitors ceremoniously broke ground on the new campus center Friday, signifying the start of another Fredericksburg campus construction project.

The campus center, to be completed in August 2015, will face Ball Circle on the spot where Chandler Hall was torn down this past summer.

The center will act as the university's "living room," said board rector Pamela White during a speech before the groundbreaking.

The \$42.8 million, 108,000-square-foot campus center will feature a dining hall, food court, retail stores, a ballroom, meeting spaces, student lounge areas and offices for student clubs and organizations.

The campus center construction has caused changes in College Avenue traffic patterns, which will continue until Oct. 11.

Demolishing Chandler Hall to build the campus center displaced the business administration and psychology departments.

Those departments moved into Mercer Hall and the Woodard Campus Center this semester.

Renovations for those buildings, costing more than \$14 million, began in late 2012 and will last until the end of 2014. That timeline was pushed back because funds from the state came in later than anticipated, said John Wiltenmuth, associate vice president for facility services.

Seacobeck Hall, the university's main dining hall, will be repurposed, but a decision on its use has not yet been made.

The Information and Technology Convergence Center, in the midst of construction across campus walk from Simpson Library, is slated to open next fall. The university estimates that 50 percent of the project has been completed.

Installation of brick and stone are completed on the building, and the firm constructing the building, W.M. Jordan, expects to have the structure closed-in by November.

The building will serve as an "academic commons," housing a data center, classrooms, offices, a digital theater, media labs, a café and numerous collaboration areas. The center will connect to Simpson Library through the third floor.

In a previous interview about the center, spokeswoman Marty Morrison said that though the exterior of the tech building will resemble the rest of the campus, the interior will have "a 21st-century look and function."

As part of the school's master plan for the Fredericksburg campus, renovations have been completed in recent years on Lee Hall, which houses administrative functions including the bookstore, Monroe Hall, an academic building, and Randolph and Mason residence halls.

The Hyatt Place Hotel in Eagle Village shopping center is also nearing completion.

Jeff Rountree, CEO of the UMW Foundation, which is responsible for the project, said the hotel is on schedule to open in early 2014.

He said crews have almost finished the rooms on fifth and fourth floors and one of the elevators is now running.

According to Rountree, occupancy in Eagle Village is up, with 90 percent of the business space occupied.

Planet Fitness opened last week in the shopping center, with over 3,000 households registered before its first day of operations, he said. Even UMW president Rick Hurley is a member.

The board also passed the newest version of the master plan Friday, designed by Stantec Architecture, formerly called Burt, Hill.

In this version of the master plan, new academic and residential space is planned.

Recommendations include new living-learning communities constructed where Bushnell, South and Framar halls now stand; an addition to Jepsen Science Center; renovation of duPont Hall, Seacobeck Hall and the amphitheater; and a new parking deck across the street from duPont Hall.

Each of these projects would be checked against the nearly completed preservation plan to ensure the historical integrity of the campus is not tarnished.

"We are not committing dollars or a timeline to the changes recommended," White explained about the master plan. "But it gives us a working plan that we can refer to, not defer to, as we make academic and residence and social life issues. None of the decisions the board makes are ever undertaken in a vacuum. This gives us context for the decisions we make."

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PRESERVATION PLAN OUTLINED

UMW historical preservation professor Michael Spencer, who has compiled the preservation plan for the Fredericksburg campus, said the document "works in tandem with the master plan."

The preservation plan began in January 2011 and will take three years to fully complete.

In the plan, Spencer, with the help of other faculty and student researchers, investigated about 95 structures and landscapes. Those features were then documented and analyzed.

The plan constitutes 10 chapters, over 450 pages and took over 1,000 hours of work so far.

Buildings and landscaping are rated on a scale between one and four, one being the highest priority, on their historical significance to the campus.

He intends to update the document every five years.

"By maintaining, doing a little bit at a time, this becomes a working, growing, organic document," Spencer said.

A building such as Seacobeck Hall, which is part of the original campus, is an excellent example of Charles Robinson architecture. It would receive a rating of one and to remodel or demolish it would take a number of committee meetings. Such effort would not be necessary for a building rated four.

Still, Spencer said he understands that many buildings on campus have emotional value for students.

"Bushnell and Jefferson do not have great historical value," he said. "But there is emotional value to me because I lived there [as an undergraduate]."

—Lindley Estes

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