

Science Center Construction & Budget Update

As we witness the steady progress of construction on our new Science Center, I wanted to write and provide the campus community with an update on the status of construction and funding.

Construction Update

The Science Center has made significant progress since last spring. The first floor interior is fully framed, and the crew has started framing the interior spaces of the building's second floor. Exterior framing has started as well, and the roof will be in place by the end of the month. Construction is progressing smoothly, and we are currently on track for an August 2007 grand opening.

During the planning for this facility, the University made important enhancements to its early plans that will enable the Science Center to not only meet today's needs, but also our anticipated needs for many years to come. The new center will contain state-of-the-art labs in which our faculty and students will advance their research. The building will include a physics lab; a plant science lab; an ecology and field biology lab; an anatomy and physiology lab; a microbiology and molecular biotechnology lab; a chemical and biological prep lab; an analytical and quantitative chemistry lab; and a cell biology and biochemistry lab. In addition, the building will house two computer labs, as well as research, meeting, and office space.

The inclusion of such sophisticated lab space has affected several aspects of the building's exterior. Because equipment will be running all night, we needed to redesign the structure so that the sound would not exceed required decibel levels. We also needed to redesign the roof in order to accommodate HVAC and exhaust requirements, while at the same time keeping within height limits required by the City of San Rafael. In addition to reconfiguring the building's height, the City's Design Review Board also required us to build a new sidewalk along Palm Avenue.

Though we are still some months away from its completion, we fully anticipate that the Science Center will be available to accommodate presentations from some of the more than 2,200 students and faculty who will attend NCUR 2007 at Dominican from April 12-14. Our contractors are working to ensure that the building's interior spaces will be safe and comfortable for our guests.

Budget Update

The University's decision to build a Science Center that will house numerous specialized research labs to accommodate the needs of our faculty and students is a decision that will, in many ways, transform this institution for years to come. That decision, however, along with requirements imposed by local authorities and the ever-increasing costs of materials—copper, steel, and concrete particularly—has added to the cost of the facility. In 2001, the Science Center was budgeted at nearly \$16 million. Today, with our enhanced research design and increased costs of construction, the budget is approximately \$20 million.

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To meet the budget for this the facility, we have embarked on an aggressive campaign to raise additional private funds. Our strategy for this campaign involves pursuing further funding from NASA; soliciting additional individual gifts from Trustees, alumni, and friends; and securing corporate and foundation grants from regional and national organizations. Having raised over \$9.6 million to date for this important facility, we are optimistic that other major donors will step forward and invest in the project. Even before the cost escalation, we had planned to fund a portion of the building costs by acquiring CEFA bond money. These funds have been secured and are available to us. In addition to our fundraising and bond raising efforts for the Science Center and due to our strong financial conduction, the University will, if necessary, be able to allocate additional resources to help complete the facility.

The Science Center is an important and vital investment for Dominican. I hope that you will join me in celebrating our progress as this impressive structure joins our campus landscape.

Joseph Fink

Joseph R. Fink
President

Dominican University of California
50 Acacia Avenue
San Rafael, CA 94901
Telephone: 415-485-3200
Fax: 415-485-0483
jrf@dominican.edu