

New Center is Open for Business

And for geography, public policy and more



On Jan. 17, faculty began moving into their new offices in the Business & Public Management Center (BPMC). The following Monday, Jan. 23, the first classes were held in this spacious new building, which, at 96,000 square feet, is the largest classroom building on campus.

Situated at Sharpless and Church streets, the five-story, \$45 million facility is home to the departments of accounting, criminal justice, economics and finance, geography and planning, management, marketing, and public policy and administration. It also houses the Cottrell Entrepreneurial Leadership Center, the Center for Social and Economic Public Policy Research, and the Geographic Information Systems and Spatial Analysis Center.

The new building is a juxtaposition of old and new that blends seamlessly with its University neighbors. “The Business & Public Management Center looks to the past, present, and future,” notes Patrick Brunner, WCU’s executive director of design and construction. “Our campus is characterized by collegiate gothic buildings, so we chose to have the exterior façade of BPMC reflect this language of pointed arches and buttresses, with limestone at the entry arcade.”

The interior of the building immediately lets you know that you are in the modern day, with a real-time stock index display, contemporary colors and finishes, and classrooms that take full advantage of innovative technologies. A grand staircase and chandelier that features opaque panels embedded with shredded text-book paper dominate the main lobby.

The center has 23 multimedia classrooms, five collaborative classrooms, 13 classrooms with tiered seating, a 189-seat lecture hall, five seminar/conference rooms, and 137 offices. Faculty offices border the perimeter of the upper levels, creating warm and personal spaces to mentor, teach, and write.

The main corridors of the three academic floors have been designed with alcoves, where students can study alone or work in small groups. These inviting spaces have outlets to recharge laptops or phones, whiteboards, and a variety of seating styles.

“I love my new office. It is the first time — aside from being in the Chair’s office — that I have my own work space on campus,” says Joan Welch, a professor in the department of geography and planning “I have a great view north of some of my favorite trees (a bald cypress, a copper beech and a white pine). I also can see the storm water management feature that collects all runoff from the site and filters the

water through a three-tiered system to clean it before it drains into the storm sewer and then directly into Plum Run stream.”

“The water bottle refilling stations on each floor are wonderful and I expect that we’ll save thousands of plastic water bottles from the landfill this semester alone,” she adds. “The bathrooms have hand dryers rather than paper towels. And I no longer have a waste basket. The office came equipped with a recycling bin with a small receptacle for waste that I empty myself.”

The building includes numerous other sustainable design features, says Brunner. It is heated and cooled by means of geothermal energy and a green roof will be installed later this year. It was built, as much as possible, with locally sourced and recycled materials. Low-emitting paints, adhesives, sealants and coatings also were used. Recently, the University learned that the building was awarded LEED Gold certification in recognition of its sustainable design features and environmental performance. Two WCU buildings are LEED Silver certified but the Business and Public Management Center is the first LEED Gold building on campus.