

MORE THAN A BUILDING

During the 2013 fall semester, McCarthy Hall, a student residence along Sharpless St., is being demolished to make way for a 90,000 square-foot facility housing the majority of programs in the College of Business and Public Affairs.

Designed by the architectural team of Voith-MacTavish Architects and Moody-Nolan Ltd., the five-story building will include classrooms, faculty offices, lecture halls, seminar and conference rooms, and student lounges. Its archway entrances on South Church St. will resemble the Collegiate Gothic style of Philips Memorial building. My suggestion for the interior description: This exterior and interior will reflect state-of-the-art, design, materials, finishes and technology with a goal of achieving LEED Platinum classification.

Given the College of Business and Public Affairs' unprecedented growth over the last several years, larger and more up-to-date facilities had become one of the University's key goals.

"This new building is critical to the College's ability to continue attracting quality faculty and students," says Christopher Fiorentino, who during his 20-year tenure as dean of Business and Public Affairs, oversaw much of that College's expansion.

Larger and more centralized classroom and faculty office space had become a priority for the University's second largest college. With its ten departments scattered throughout the campus, faculty were becoming segregated in such a way as to inhibit collaboration within and across the College's departments. Insufficient meeting spaces with two or three faculty members sharing one office had begun to hinder the ability for faculty and students to meet privately.

The new facility is expected to address the need for more and better designed space to enhance students' educational experience. In addition to allowing for individual faculty offices, the top two floors will be designed to encourage faculty collaboration. The first three floors will consist of classrooms, lecture halls, student lounges and meeting rooms with spaces that foster student-faculty interaction.

"Right now, there are very few satisfactory places for our students to comfortably congregate with each other or to meet with faculty," says the College of Business and Public Affairs' interim dean Michelle Patrick.

“We are deliberately creating spaces to eliminate isolation among our College’s departments and encourage greater interaction among faculty and students.”

The new facility also will contain a new type of educational concept in an otherwise typical lecture hall. “It’s called a ‘dinner theatre’ classroom,” explains Patrick. “We observed this at a number of top graduate and undergraduate schools around the country and decided to test its effectiveness with one of our graduate classes.

“The feedback we received was very positive.”

In a dinner theatre classroom, a class could begin in a theatre-style arrangement with students seated at rectangular tables at the front of the lecture hall. The faculty member could direct the students to break into teams, who then could turn away from the front of the lecture room and join other students seated at round tables.

A number of class rooms also will come with various technologies. Faculty, for example, who choose to teach a course collaboratively with a colleague across campus will be able to team up their class with other students online in a different location across campus.

“This new facility will really be more than just a new building,” says Patrick. “It will create a sense of community for students and faculty in the College of Business and Public Affairs who come there to teach and learn,” says Patrick.