Moving in

Students and faculty work together to settle into the new science center

Home at last!

After years of planning, and following some 18 months of building the entire science center, faculty and students have started the move into the new science center, the final step before the building’s debut with the start of classes.

And they couldn’t be happier. “It’ll be great to work in the new labs,” said El Scheide, a chemistry major from Muskegon, Mich.

“We were excited to get to decide where everything gets to go and be a part of a new process.”

—Junior Kelley Hutchins.

“It’s exciting to have space,” said senior Isabelle Lee of Grand Rapids, Mich. “It’s huge—there’s so much more room,” said junior Stephanie Koutzis of Zeeland, Mich. “When we were measuring in Puel in the summer, we had five people in a space maybe 10 feet wide, and were tripping over each other.”

The new science center is being constructed through the Legacies: A Vision for Hope fund-raising campaign. The $350,000 square foot new construction is opening this fall, and renovation of the existing (and attached) Puel Science Center will take phase during the 2003-04 school year. The project totals $16 million—a hefty cost with which the college still works hard (please see the related story at right). The new building is 90,000 square feet. The central atrium, which spans all three stories, is 78 feet high. The main east-west hallway is longer than a football field and is located on an east-west axis, with the others skewed into the new building until the middle of the new science center.

The move is particularly exciting for some, given the building’s design. “This represents the first time the department has had purpose-built quarters in its 25-plus years,” the group had previously housed in dormitory quarters.

“We just couldn’t do things in the residence hall that we’ll be able to do in the new labs,” said Dr. Sietsema, associate chair of nursing and chairperson of the department. “So our students’ experience will be more real, more true to life, and that can only improve learning.”

Professor Sietsesma especially raves that the department will be able to do more closely to other departments on campus. “We’re very excited about it and feel that it will open up so many different opportunities that we have not had before,” she said.

The building has been designed with such connections in mind. Instead of departmental isolation, the organization is based on general research focus. For example, molecular biologists and analytical chemists are near one another.

“The faculty are intentional about moving in a new direction—and that’s interdisciplinary and collaborative,” said Dr. James Gentile, who does research in the sciences. “The building will catalyze that, because the way it’s been put together. In fact, it will demand that because that’s the way it’s been put together.”

Dr. Gentile believes that connections that cannot yet even be imagined will result to the advantage of the students the college—whether with Hope faculty or with other departments involved.

“We just couldn’t do things in the nursing house that we’ll be able to do in the new science lab.”

—Debra Sietsesma chair of nursing.

In the short term, the building’s demands are still settling into their new space. The move began on July 8, and is continuing even in the final weeks of summer.

Coordinated by Ted Gagnon, 95 director of chemistry laboratories, the process is a model of organization, with detailed charts outlining who is moving when, and where from where and who. The work is being done by some 50-40 students, many of whom have been involved in research in the departments involved.

Dr. Leah Chase, assistant professor of biology and chemistry, was one of the first to have her laboratory move. The work started at 6 a.m., and by 8 a.m. it was done.

“I can’t believe we’re in after two hours,” she said.

“It’s a real tribute to the students,” she said. “They have an idea of how the lab should be laid out, and they have ownership in this project, too. They want to see it go as well as possible.”

“We were excited to get to decide where everything gets to go and be a part of a new process,” said junior Kelley Hurthen of Livonia, Mich., who helped with the move and has conducted research with Dr. Chase. As the narrowed space newly filled with shelves and boxes filled with rocks, geology major Sarah Schrock of Holland, Mich., expressed the same sentiment.

“I think it’s going to be great,” she said of the building.

“It is really neat that I get to be here and be a part of this,” Schrock said. “It was here when we still had to wear hard hats.”

Funding remains crucial need

The Hope community will celebrate the new building with an open house during Homecoming Weekend.

On Friday, Oct. 17, from 4 to 6 p.m., the college’s third annual Undergraduate Research Celebration will take place at the science center. The event will include student poster presentations concerning joint student-faculty collaboration research projects and self-guided tours of the building.

The building will also be open on Saturday, Oct. 18, from 9 a.m. to noon for self-guided tours and continuous display of the posters.

Unpacking glassware goes quickly as a team effort by junior Abby Bushwelter of Hopewell Junction, N.Y.; junior Roos Coleman of Grand Rapids, Mich.; and senior Isabelle Lee of Grand Rapids.

“The Escort from Puel into the new science center began in earnest on Friday, July 18, and will continue that way through the coming weeks as the building is made ready for the start of classes. Prom to left to right are Sarah Brumley of Dearborn, Mich.; sophomore Natale Hogren of Orange City, Iowa; and junior Louie Schupf of Lincoln, Neb.

Dr. William Mungall of the chemistry faculty works with the nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometer in his new in the building.

Even though the new science center will open with the start of classes, fund-raising for the building is not complete and remains a priority.

There are still many giving opportunities for those interested in supporting the project.

A major challenge is the Kneuweg Foundation of Troy, Mich., which will make a particular emphasis on obtaining the $1,000,000 grant upon raising an additional $1,000,000 for the new building by March of 2004.

There is a fund-raising edge to the effect that it becomes more difficult to raise money for a building once ground has been broken. Dr. James Gentile, dean for the natural sciences, called it a matter of faith that the college decided to move ahead even though the project wasn’t fully funded. Given the critical need for modern facilities and more space, he noted, Hope couldn’t afford to wait—and proceeded confidently that the Hope family would rise to the fund-raising challenge. And in this case, 36 feet, having the building ready can be an advantage. The difference is the ease is now visible to all.

“Come and take a look, and I defy anybody to come into this building and not be impressed with what’s here,” said Hope President Dr. Bill Haller. “And I hope they can help the college achieve,” he said.

The $26 million science center project—which includes both the new building and the renovation of the existing Puel Science Center—is supported by the Legacies: A Vision of Hope campaign.

On October 12, at 2 p.m., the campaign aims to raise $105 million by the end of December. In addition to the science center project, the major components are: reconstructing the Delius Trackfield; increasing the endowment; and general campus improvements, including the construction of the Martha Miller Center for communication, modern and classical languages and multicultural life. Thus far, the campaign has raised more than $35 million. For more information about the campaign, please visit the college online at www.hope.edu or call 616-395-7200. To make a pledge to the campaign, please call 616-395-7273.