

Fall 2002 | Volume 16, Issue 2

Contents 

[CLICK](#)

Akron

THE UNIVERSITY OF AKRON MAGAZINE FOR ALUMNI & FRIENDS

Planning Becomes Reality: Arts & Sciences Building Opens



Pictured in front of the facility they helped envision and bring to reality are, left to right — Dr. John A. Fink, Board member and Chair, Facilities Planning and Oversight Committee; Dr. Luis M. Proenza, President; Dr. Mark N. Apte, Chair, Board of Trustees; and Mr. Ted Curtis, Vice President of Capital Planning and Facilities Management.

Plus:

Leading Our Future: Super Superintendents

Start Your Engineers: Our students succeed in national competitions

On An Honor Roll: Honors program continues to grow

A New Landscape For Learning –



By David Nypaver '82

Planning Becomes Reality



On the bright, warm morning of September 4, the University's past, present and future added their respective voices to the dedication ceremony for the new College of Arts & Sciences building.

The past spoke first in the form of an antique hand bell that, according to University lore, announced class changes at Buchtel

The new College of Arts & Sciences Building (above) dedicated Sept 4, 2002, features a four-story atrium, the largest atrium in a classroom building in the history of The University of Akron.

College a century ago. At 11 a.m., Dr. Luis M. Proenza, president of The University of Akron, stood at a podium near the building's main entrance on College

Street, raised the relic and clanged it to open the ceremony.

Soon after, other speakers at the podium found themselves vying with the big-engine drone of the airship *Spirit of Goodyear*. The blimp surfed the air currents over campus, intermittently drumming its engines and flashing exuberant light-board messages of congratulations to the crowd below.

And every now and then, the future – always disdainful of pomp and ceremony – busily rumbled past on the backs of dump trucks and heavy equipment heading toward any of three major construction sites on campus.

As building dedications go, this was a true milestone for the campus. The College of Arts & Sciences building is one of the jewels of the New Landscape for Learning campus enhancement program. It is the first of the program's major academic buildings that will be used by a large percentage of undergraduate students.

Perhaps most significant, the dedication also signaled that the New Landscape for Learning campaign – a multiyear, \$200 million program to build six new buildings, renovate 14 others and add 30 acres of green space to campus – has passed the mid-point, and by year's end will be almost two-thirds complete, according to Ted Curtis, vice president for capital planning and facilities management.

The University's Board of Trustees approved the master plan for the New Landscape for Learning program in the late 1990s. Dr. Mark N. Apte chaired the Board's Facilities, Planning and Oversight Committee during the launch of the

program. He became Board chairman in 2002, and the committee's leadership went to Dr. John A. Fink. Both men have worked extensively with Curtis to keep the project moving ahead.

The College of Arts & Sciences building is a 127,200-square-foot structure that contains 14 general purpose classrooms, eight classrooms/labs wired with fiber optics for wireless communication and Internet connectivity, eight conference and seminar rooms, a soils research laboratory, and 151 faculty and student offices. Housed within the four-story building are the departments of computer science, economics, geography and planning, history, psychology, statistics, and theoretical and applied mathematics, as well as the Institute for Life-Span Development and Gerontology, Psychological Counseling Clinic and the Center for Statistical Consulting.

Three features of the College of Arts & Sciences building make it unique on campus. First is the soaring four-story atrium. No other classroom building on campus has an atrium of this size. Its lobby will feature sculptured art panels with representative symbols of the Akron community and of the college's departments. The panels are being produced by New York artist Matthew Mulligan, and will be installed by January.

(continued to page 21)

Tucked behind the building and accessed through the atrium is the Lewis C. Turner Amphitheatre. Sloping down a hillock on the eastern flank of the building, the amphitheatre features concentric, semi-circular bands of concrete poured into the hillside with seating for 200. Set amongst the trees, shrubbery and other landscaping for the amphitheatre are four 22-foot-tall freestanding Ionic columns. These limestone columns once were part of East Hall, and were salvaged when the building was razed in 1995. The amphitheatre is available to all faculty and students, and will be used for public discourse, special events and teaching.

This classical addition to the campus landscape is named for a man who was an alumnus, a faculty member and a renowned public speaker who presented more than 400 university and high school commencement speeches throughout the country. Lewis C. Turner '29, who died in 1985 at the age of 93, was a high school principal and a UA instructor in public speaking for more than 25 years during the 1930s, 40s and 50s. One of the young people he influenced was Dr. Paul E. Martin '35, a University benefactor who donated funds to provide the space for the amphitheatre.

A third unique feature of the College of Arts & Sciences building is its exterior design. The structure is the first of the New Landscape for Learning major projects to fully incorporate all elements of a design philosophy that unifies the varied architectures found on campus.

Shortly after he arrived on campus in 1998, Curtis developed the philosophy and required architects who submitted proposals for New Landscape for Learning projects to work with a specific palate. "I told them we wanted to see red-brown brick, a color similar to what's on Buchtel Hall, with stone. I wanted brick and stone because those two materials project importance, project respectability and give permanence to a structure."

The choice of tan limestone complements the exterior materials used on structures constructed in the 1960s, during the institution's last major building program, without repeating that era's design.

"We're also using glass to represent the research personality of the University" added Curtis. Glass gives transparency. From a practical standpoint, people on the outside can see the activity within, and for those indoors, the glass allows nature to come into the building.

"That's the design philosophy that we established, and we had the architects use their

own imagination and come up with designs that we monitor and massage and adjust," said Curtis.

More Openings on the Horizon

Just as the Buchtel College of Arts and Science's faculty and staff began moving into the building well before the official dedication date, others on campus are making preparations to occupy two more major projects that are scheduled to be completed by year's end.

The Auburn Science Center Library is reopened following a major expansion and addition. Located in the Auburn Science and Engineering Center, the expanded library is now 140 percent larger than before and offers students and faculty 12 study rooms, 18 study carrels, seating for 150 at study tables, a conference room and a class/seminar room. Faculty and students from the Goodyear Polymer Center will access the library via a skywalk that connects the two centers.

The next opening will occur in January when students return to classes from winter intercession. Phase One of the Student Union will be substantially completed in November, and occupants will begin moving in after semester exams.

This first section of the Student Union was built adjacent to the west end of Gardner Student Center. It provides 98,000 square feet of space for student offices, a bookstore, movie theatre, convenience store and other facilities. Shortly after students and staff settle into the

new building, crews will begin Phase Two of the Student Union. This second, significantly larger portion of the total project is expected to take at least 18 months to complete, and will add office space, entertainment facilities, lounges, computer labs and much more to the complex. When completed in 2004, the new Student Union will yield almost 200,000-square-feet of space.

As Gardner Student Center goes down on the south side of campus, other structures are rising in the north and east. Work continues on the North Parking Deck, located on the site of the former North Hall and Central Stores buildings. The deck will provide more than 1,100 parking spaces within a five-minute walk to the center of campus when completed in 2003.

Meanwhile, the framework of the Student Recreation Center and Athletic Field House has emerged from its foundations at the corner of Brown and Carroll streets. The 295,000-square-foot recreation center will include a three-court gymnasium, two-court multi-sports area, rock climbing wall, cardiovascular training area, free weights and strength training area, aerobics/dance studio, running/walking track, recreation pool, short-term baby-sitting and other amenities upon its completion in 2004.

The University also has aggressively renovated several existing structures. A chain link fence has surrounded Leigh Hall for months while workers demolished its interior, and now construction of new classrooms and offices is under way. Remodeling of Whitby Hall also is well under way.

The University's skyline isn't the only part of campus that has grown over the last year. During the 2001-2002 academic year, 25 acres were added to campus, primarily through land acquisition in the area south of Buchtel Avenue, said David J. Pierson, director of architectural services and capital planning.

He pointed out that construction on campus doesn't cease just because the snow begins to fly.

"We try to get enclosure before the cold weather sets in. Construction jobs are like beehives during the winter: there doesn't seem to be much happening outside, but there's lots of activity going on inside," said Pierson. "Besides, with the new concrete technologies that are available, we can pour in the winter, too."

So even if the weather doesn't cooperate, the University's New Landscape for Learning campus enhancement program is likely to remain ahead of schedule. ■



Limestone columns, salvaged from East Hall, now define the Lewis C. Turner Amphitheatre.



The Man with the Plan

By Ed Buchanan

The New Landscape for Learning is a great idea – but imagine being responsible for turning it into a reality.

You've got 60 months to build six new multistory buildings, renovate 14 other structures, and create 30 acres of new green space. You've got to juggle contractors, building inspectors, architects and vendors, while answering to trustees, government officials, senior administrators and the state's taxpayers.

Then there are the street closings, weather delays, parking issues, and the need to keep the campus functioning and attractive while giving it the biggest makeover it's had in more than a quarter century.

Sound like too much of a challenge? Not to Ted Curtis, the University's vice president of capital planning and facilities management. He dismisses the challenges with a shrug. Where some might see the project's scope and complexity as intimidating, he views it as an opportunity.

"I'm at retirement age now, and when I leave, I want to leave knowing that I made a difference here," Curtis says.

He recalls that when his children were young, he used to take them to the University's green areas to play. Now one of his personal goals is to recreate that environment, to make the campus a place where people will come on a Sunday afternoon, buy an ice cream and just walk the commons and lawns.

"I want to unify this campus and get it to work better so that people feel comfortable, so that they enjoy coming to campus," he says.

Curtis' experience in architecture, design and building spans more than four decades. He has worked on projects in England, Turkey, Monte

Carlo and Hong Kong, as well as the United States, including Hawaii, Chicago, Miami, San Francisco, Atlanta, New York and Beverly Hills.

"I've seen architecture styles and design philosophies not only in the U.S., but around the world. I've rubbed elbows with some of the world's best architects, best interior designers and best planners. I've learned from them that there's more than what you'll find within the boundaries of the state of Ohio. There's nothing wrong with the architecture in Ohio, but it's always good

to see what somebody else is doing."

Curtis also is well acquainted with Northern Ohio's architecture, having contributed more than his share. Before joining Hilton Hotels in 1985, he served as an architect for Kent State University in the 1970s and 1980s and was president of his own architectural firm, Curtis & Rasmussen Architects. But Curtis is best known locally for his role in the development of Quaker Square, and its innovative conversion of grain silos into hotel rooms.

"I was part of the group of four investors who bought the building from Quaker Oats in 1972. So I was an owner, the developer and the operator, as well as the architect and builder."

At the time, bankers and large construction companies told Curtis that the conversion he envisioned was impossible.

"The more they told me I couldn't do it, the more determined I was to do it. So we developed the whole project – owned it, operated it and when I went to California, I sold my share."

The same stubborn streak that made the Quaker Square project a success reappeared when the New Landscape for Learning program was scheduled.

"The biggest challenge (of the project) is something we've manufactured ourselves, and that's the timeline. When I first announced that we'd complete the program in about five years, I was told by some people that I wouldn't be able to do it. I said give me the funds and we'll get it done.

"We could have extended it out to seven, eight, maybe 10 years and no one would have flinched. The critical thing is, think how many students would not come here because we took our time."

At present, the New Landscape for Learning program is more than two-thirds complete and under budget by an impressive \$7 million. Curtis

is quick to share the credit for that success with his staff.

"My whole staff here has been phenomenal because they've embraced the challenges and are all working extremely hard, long hours."

One wonders though. Wouldn't he like a cushion of an extra year or two to complete the massive program?

He replies with the same shrug as before.

"I always work better when I have a tight deadline." ■

Contents

Help Us Recruit Great Students...

...And Receive a Free Decal!

The University of Akron's alumni are the perfect ambassadors for their Alma Mater. Please take a moment to share the name of a prospective student with us. Mail this form to the Alumni Association and we'll send you a free University of Akron decal!

Please mail University of Akron information to the following student:

Student's Name

Area Code and Phone Number

Address

City State Zip Code

High School

Grade

Your Name

Your Area Code and Phone Number

Your Address

City State Zip Code

Mail to: **Akron Magazine Recruiter**
The University of Akron
277 South Broadway Street
Akron, OH 44325-0604