

CAMPUS NEWS

Behrend Growth

continued from front page.

On the “wish list,” as described by several Behrend officials, sits at least temporarily a new residence hall, Tripp, and a Fine Arts Center, which could be as far as a decade or two away, since it would use state funds. These projects are long-term ideas, and there is no guarantee that they will be completed. According to Burke, these projects could happen within half a decade; for example, there is a possibility that the Fine Arts Center could qualify for money through the economic stimulus plan. As of print time, the chancellor had planned a meeting with local Representative Curt Sonney but had not yet discussed even the possibility of that route.

So, how will this affect the average Behrend student?

According to Ken Miller, Director of Student Affairs at Behrend, when a need arises, it will be met by the college. For a long time, for example, there was a physical disconnect between different departments on-campus. Students are expressing frustration at having Financial Aid, the Bursar's office, and Career Development in completely separate buildings; the Metzgar Center will combine them all under one roof, leading to ease of use for both incoming and current students.

Even past the departments of the school, the changes will bring about marked shifts in ideals for the campus. The SFF Committee, which collects information from students on what they want to see change on-campus, provides students with a clear voice that goes

“One huge point of expansion that we need to consider is faculty office space,” he says. “There are faculty members who are very short of space in their offices.”

Ream, whose duties involve both looking at new facilities but also renovating old ones, says that there are already processes underway to expand the space for faculty. He cited a plan within the Benson building this summer that will retrofit an old lab, as well as add two research labs and two faculty offices.

As far as specific projects, each project has its own unique characteristics in how it will affect the campus.

**Reed Bookstore renovation**  
Construction starts: (in progress)  
Project finishes: August 2009

(all dates tentative)

The Bookstore Renovations in the Reed Union Building seem to be attracting the most attention from students. Though the construction is largely blocked from the view of bypassers, it will have a huge impact on the setup of the Reed building.

The basic fundamentals of the project will include a second floor with offices that will extend above where the bookstore used to be. The entrance to the new second floor will be located right next to the spiral steps ascending from the Reed lobby.

Demolition is already complete, and the bookstore will move back to its prior location sometime in early or mid-August.

“We want to stay Behrend.”

-Dede Christiansen, Associate Dean

straight to the “top” of Behrend administration. Many improvements on-campus, though, will provide students not only with improvements to daily life on-campus, but within their academic studies, too.

Miller points to the renovations slated to begin in the chemistry labs of Science as the best example.

“We don't have nearly enough lab space for all students there,” he says. “So by improving the facilities, we can provide some extra expansion room within that program.”

The aim of all of the improvements slated to appear soon at Behrend is to enhance the Behrend experience, according to administrators. That experience applies to faculty, too.

John Ream, Director of Operations at Behrend, says that in order to accommodate all faculty, staff, and students, everyone's needs must be taken into consideration.

The new offices will combine the Division of Undergraduate Studies with Career Development. Director of Student Affairs Ken Miller says that the idea behind combining the two departments was to make the area a “one-stop shop” for finding a career or finding a major.

The Division of Undergraduate Studies and Career Development offices will be taken by Educational Equity. Right now, the inaccessibility of Educational Equity inconveniences many students. This would combine together the offices of Andy Harrera and Michelle Brown, which will improve confidentiality issues and allow the Educational Equity department to possibly expand staff.

The offices upstairs will also include a glass-enclosed conference room, interview room, and video room. The university plans to make use of new technology in the construction of



Photo courtesy of John Ream, Director of Operations at Penn State Erie, the Behrend College

A digital rendering of the Robert and Sally Metzgar Center. The project has a rough finishing date of May to summer 2010, and will be located next to the Reed parking lot, acting as a “gateway” to Behrend. The program is estimated to cost around \$4 million.

these conference rooms, with several computer kiosks and desk space in almost every room.

The cost of the project is estimated to be about \$1.5 million.

**Robert and Sally Metzgar Admissions and Alumni Center**  
Construction Starts: April 2009  
Project Finishes: May 2010

(all dates tentative)

One of the largest additions to come to Behrend over the next few years will be the Robert and Sally Metzgar Admissions and Alumni Center, made possible by a \$2 million donation by the Metzgars. The entire program cost is estimated to be around \$4 million.

The idea behind the Admissions and Alumni Center, or the “Metzgar Center,” as it has become known, is that the combination of admissions and alumni relations into one building will provide students with a focal point on-campus.

“The center will be the first place Penn State Behrend students visit on campus,” said Jack Burke on the Penn State Behrend website, “and it will be the same building that welcomes them back as alumni.”

Robert Metzgar felt that the donation would provide Behrend with an attractive “front door” to welcome students and returning alumni.

The building itself will bring the registrar, bursar's office, and financial aid all under the same roof. Ken Miller says that probably the best part about the project will be that it will help students with another one-stop shop.

“There's a whole lot less running around for students during their college careers,” he says. “and a lot less running around for families during the admission process.”

**Dobbins Dining Hall renovations**  
Construction starts: Sept. 2009  
Project finishes: Summer 2010

(all dates tentative)

Renovations to Dobbins will go out to bid in mid-May of 2009, after the Spring semester is over. Right now, the design is up for the renovations, and architects are constructing bids.

Randy Geering, Director of Housing and Food Services, says that the generally favorable bid atmosphere could aid the project. The favorable bids on other projects, says Geering, could repeat themselves for the Dobbins project.

The main intent behind the renovations to the campus's dining hall is to both make better use of its space, and offer more food options to students.

The project plans to completely renovate the middle floor of Dobbins to create new office space, a freight elevator, and a conference room.

There will also be an addition on the upper side of the building, stretching from the south end all the way to the current upper door.

There will be a special events dining room and catering office within the new addition, greatly adding to the versatility and usefulness of the building.

Also, the existing serving area will be rearranged, which will bring a larger variety of food to students.

“We're going to aim for a homestyle, Caribbean, and other grill section,” says Geering. “We'll move the salad bar, and make a 'real' Wok bar. Make it quicker, move more people through.”

Also, the stairwells, which Geering describes as nothing less than “disgusting,” will be replaced. The windows will also be redone, and a general use elevator will be installed.

There will also be a new roof, new utilities, and kitchen equipment added to the building.

The program will cost more than the renovations project to take place in Reed, but no estimates are currently available for publication.

**Reed 117 and Reed lounge space renovations**  
Construction starts: May 2010  
Project finishes: August 2010

This will be a summer project for Behrend. As per the student response on the SFF proposal, the college will aim to renovate Reed 117 and simultaneously provide more lounge space in the building.

The process of renovations for this will likely take no longer than the summer. Both

the retrofitting of Reed 117 and the addition of lounge space in the building will hopefully be finished by the beginning of fall semester in 2010, waiting for students when they come back from summer.

The SFF proposal also recommended a feasibility study for a copy center to be added to Reed, but there are problems with that idea.

“The definition of a copy center is kind of fluid,” says Ken Miller. “What kind of services should it offer? There are many different interpretations, so that needs to be defined first.”

Miller hopes that bids will be back for the Reed 117 and Reed lounge space by February of 2010. This will allow the SFF Committee of that year to look more into a recreation center, another request from students on this year's SFF proposal.

“If they know what money they have to work with,” says Miller, “it gives flexibility to the committee. With [Reed 117 and lounge space additions] out of the way, the committee will have a concrete estimate of costs and resources. This will allow them to work more on the top priority on the SFF proposal: a convenience store.

to Route 90. “There was speculation as far as retail,” says Ken Miller, “like Target, or a GetGo. There were also some ideas for apartments to put up there. Nothing was for sure, though.”

The developer, however, “backed out” of trying to develop the land, and it could be blamed on the economy.

To Ream, the issue lies with the simple fact that if stores were going to develop in the immediate area, their business would decline over the summer.

“Students are here nine months out of the year,” he says. “That means that these businesses need to be able to attract non-students year-round, but especially in the summer, to be able to function.”

Hungry Howie's, Ream says, is able to do this because of its visibility from the Bayfront Connector and Station Road. However, if a business was not visible or popular enough, its business could drop off significantly during the summer.

“It wouldn't hurt for the college to grow a little,” Ream adds. “Businesses want to see a certain population before building. The [adding of several new buildings] in University Gates will add to this feeling,

“The Fine Arts Center could be the missing piece of the puzzle at Penn State Behrend.”

- Chancellor Jack Burke

Commercial development

The prospect of commercial development is one of the most intriguing amongst administrators and students alike. One complaint often heard by students is the lack of retail stores within walking distance. Not many are aware that in many places right around Behrend, the possibility exists that commercial development will move in.

The caveat in this situation is the declining economy. While there was some serious interest in companies moving stores into the areas, the recent credit crunch has put a plug in any kind of development plans.

There are several places that commercial development could happen in the immediate area.

One possibility is development further along Station Road, says Director of Operations John Ream.

University Gates owns a piece of property along Station Road, on the far side of the connector between Station and the Bayfront Connector, on the Bayfront side of the road. Penn State also owns a neighboring piece of land, and the possibility remains open for commercial development there.

There was also significant interest, before the economic crisis, in developing land behind the Country Fair next

and could entice some more businesses.”

Commercial development, even close to campus, would likely require no coordination with the university, except if Penn State plans to sell a plot of land that it owns to developers.

Fine Arts Center

Firmly planted in the “wish list” category, the Fine Arts Center is labelled by several administrators, including Chancellor Burke, as the “last missing piece to the Behrend puzzle.”

Burke says that, in his attempt to get money for the project, he has shown pictures of the current theatre, music room, and other arts performance venues. Since it would be listed under the Department of General Services, the project would require state money.

Burke will be meeting with local representatives to see if economic stimulus money could be used for the Fine Arts Center. He would need to prove that it would create enough jobs in its construction, upkeep, and product, to warrant stimulus money.

The Fine Arts Center is also prominently featured on many long-range plans of the university.



A view from inside the construction area. Demolition has already finished. The windows are covered in tarps to protect them from damage, rather than to prevent students from seeing the progress.