Construction is scheduled to begin in early December with completion planned for summer 2004. Other offices will be relocated from so-called "temporary" buildings into the new permanent structure.

U of I President James Stukel said the improvements to UIS symbolized by the new building are "an affirmation that a University of Illinois college education is a great investment."

"UIS is an excellent journey, and this groundbreaking is an important step on the way," Stukel said.

Gov. George Ryan said the new building, along with other recent innovations, such as UIS's year-old Capital Scholars program — which brought freshmen to the campus for the first time — and the affiliation of the campus's Abraham Lincoln Presidential Center for Governmental Studies with the new Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, are "the foundation of a great school in the tradition of the University of Illinois."

Ringiesen said the new building should meet the campus's classroom and office needs for several years. As the Capital Scholars program grows, however, a new dormitory for those students will be needed in three or four years, he said.

A new town house already is under construction on the UIS campus to cope with the growth in the numbers of students who are not in Capital Scholars, he said.

Ringiesen said there still are discussions ongoing concerning the construction of a recreation center.

Talks also are still under way for the development of a "campus town" within walking distance of UIS that would have a variety of stores catering to the university community.

"I'm as optimistic about (the success of the campus town development) as I've ever been," Ringiesen said.