

UIS breaks ground for building

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Ground was broken Monday for a building destined to be "the first point of welcome for prospective students ... and the future hub and heart" of the University of Illinois at Springfield.

UIS Chancellor Richard Ringeisen said the four-story, 125,000-square-foot classroom/office building "will contribute further to the formation of a campus quadrangle and the development of more green space, where students can gather and take part in activities and have a more collegial environment in which to study and socialize."

In addition, Ringeisen said, the \$30 million, high-tech structure will ease overcrowding, allow for the expansion of collections at Brookens Library and help attract new students to the campus from across the state and nation.

The building will include technology-enhanced and "smart" classrooms, computer labs, lecture halls and academic program offices. The offices of the admissions and records department and other key student-affairs offices will be housed in the building, as will two of the university's four colleges — Business Management and Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Relocating offices currently housed in Brookens will free space in the library to expand collections there, Ringeisen said.

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."

Ringeisen 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.

Ringeisen 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," Ringeisen said.

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