



Tuesday, August 26, 2003

Expanded OC ready for fall semester

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

When students return to campus for fall semester, they can expect to find ample room and more amenities available to them in the expanded **Oakland Center**. Finishing work is being completed this week on the 30,000-square-foot addition, which features state-of-the-art student services representing OU's commitment to enhancing the educational and social environment of the campus. The expansion will be open and ready for use Sept. 2.

"The Oakland Center had been restricted in terms of space and amenities for our students," said Vice President for Student Affairs Mary Beth Snyder. "This expansion gives students the space and features they deserve for extracurricular activities. The expansion also provides an architectural centerpiece for the campus and gives the building itself an important visual identity."

The **OC expansion** provides 330 more seats in the food court area, a 7,000-square-foot multipurpose room that can seat 600, a 24-hour computer lounge featuring wireless Internet access, and an 80-seat coffee shop. The exterior features an attractive two-story, semi-circular glass front offering spectacular views of the campus mall. Other construction involved extensive remodeling and updates to the OC kitchen to meet current catering and food preparation needs.

Work on the structure is about 98 percent complete, said Janet Hepburn, manager of capital planning and design. Workers are installing items such as ceiling tiles, carpeting and cabling for data ports. A shipment of furniture is expected later this week. Exterior work is being completed on sidewalks, light fixtures and grading. Hydro seed also will be laid down this week. Workers will continue to finish the project over the holiday weekend.

"Construction proceeded well, but the logistics made it a challenging project," Hepburn said. "With the (recently completed) School of Education and Human Services Building, we were able to work in an open area of the campus with relatively few obstacles. But with the Oakland Center, we made an addition to an existing building right in the heart of campus. We also faced unexpected challenges, such as underground utilities."

Construction will continue through mid-September on the new South Foundation Hall atrium, or "fishbowl." The previous atrium and two canopies between North and South Foundation halls were removed in late June to make the curved glass exterior of the OC addition a more visible gateway to the university.

"The field challenges in the **fishbowl project** involved delays in the availability of structural steel," Hepburn said. "Nonetheless, South Foundation Hall will be accessible for the start of classes."

Grand opening celebrations for the Oakland Center expansion will take place Friday, Sept. 19, at 2 p.m. Students, faculty and staff will be invited to take a walking tour of the facility and sample refreshments. Entertainment will be provided by Oakland University's steel drum ensemble.

A number of campus groups already have booked the multipurpose room for events. To make a reservation, contact Rakhi Roy, OC assistant director, at (248) 370-3230 or roy@oakland.edu.

SUMMARY

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