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Oakland Center expansion on schedule

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

Construction remains on schedule for an August completion of the **Oakland Center** expansion project. Work on the \$8-million addition began last October and is about 20 percent complete, said Vice President for Facilities Management Rusty Postlewate.

The 30,000-square-foot addition, designed by Duce Simmons Associates, not only will provide a distinctive architectural design as an impressive visible gateway to the university but also state-of-the-art student services representing Oakland University's commitment to enhancing the educational and social environment of campus. J.M. Olson Corporation is doing the actual construction.

"This is a tough project because of the relatively short time frame in which to complete it," Postlewate said. "We contracted the same team that designed and built the (recently completed) Education and Human Services building because of our good experience with them. Both companies work together really well.

"Right now the structural steel is up along with the staircase, concrete floors and roof slab. Some exterior brick has been installed, and later this week, crews will begin installing roofing. Presently, they're performing some interior masonry work. Afterwards, they'll work on mechanical and electrical installation. That's always a long process and the most work-intensive item. More exterior work will be completed as it warms up outside."

The first floor of the addition will expand the seating area for the existing Pioneer Food Court by 330 seats. There also will be a lobby seating area, a 24-hour computer lounge featuring wireless Internet connectivity, and an 80-seat coffee shop featuring a yet-to-be-named, nationally known brand.

The second floor will provide a 7,000-square-foot multipurpose room with the capacity to seat 600 people and a pre-function lounge. This large room will supplement the Oakland Center Gold Rooms for banquets, meetings, campus entertainment and student functions.

The exterior will feature a two-story, semi-circular glass front offering spectacular views of the campus mall facing Kresge Library, the Science and Engineering Building, and South Foundation Hall.

The existing Oakland Center kitchen, which dates back to the original construction of the building in 1959, also will be completely renovated.

"The kitchen and food service preparation areas will be completely gutted and rebuilt," said Oakland Center Director Richard Fekel. "Based on today's catering and food preparation needs, the existing kitchen isn't capable of allowing a number of simultaneous food preparations. And, with the addition of the new multipurpose room, we will need to provide enhanced catering services. New equipment also will be installed to provide more cooking flexibility."

Because of interior renovations, the Pioneer Food Court will close at the beginning of May and reopen before fall semester. The Starbucks stand will remain operational, and grab-and-go sandwiches and beverages will be provided. The food court seating area will not be impacted. A variety of meals will continue to be available throughout the summer at Vandenberg Dining Center and Pic-A-Deli in the Recreation and Athletics Center.

The two canopies connecting North and South Foundation halls will be removed so the **Oakland Center** addition is more visible as the campus' architectural centerpiece. The South Foundation Hall atrium, more commonly known as the "fishbowl," will be removed and a smaller, modernized version will replace it. Construction will begin in May or June and be completed before fall semester.

"The fishbowl will be made more aesthetic and smaller, so it won't be intrusive in the corridor between North and South Foundation and the OC," Postlewate said. "It will also be updated with thermopane windows for better insulation. The students indicated that they wanted to continue to have a gathering place in South Foundation, which is why we're not going to simply eliminate it."

Because of the heavy concentration of construction in this area of campus, no classes will be held in South Foundation Hall during spring and summer semesters.

Architectural renderings and floor plans of the **Oakland Center** expansion are on display in the lounge next to the Oakland Center Administration and Reservations Office. Beginning March 25, staff will begin taking reservations for fall semester for the new multipurpose room. To make a reservation, contact Rakhi Roy, OC assistant director, at (248) 370-3245 or roy@oakland.edu.

SUMMARY

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