

OPTIMISM BUILDS

for Pharmacy Hall addition

As if they are waiting to be hung, two framed architectural renderings of the Pharmacy Hall addition—each from a different perspective—lean against a wall in the Pharmacy Hall office of Dean Natalie D. Eddington, PhD. The renderings are done in soft pastels. The new building, splashed with spots of brown and green, exhibits firm, bold lines, an expanse of glass, and green space as it stands harmoniously beside Pharmacy Hall. However, the renderings are not ready to retire to a wall just yet. The dean often uses them to illustrate her vision of the new building.

“Pharmacy Hall addition will be the first introduction to the campus for those traveling south on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard,” Eddington says. “The building will be aesthetically pleasing and inviting and will reflect innovations in the practice of pharmacy.”

The drive to build an addition to Pharmacy Hall has taken years of behind-the-scenes planning and persuasion.

“Actually, the effort has been more than a decade long,” recalls former Dean David A. Knapp, PhD, who spearheaded the expansion for a long time. “The effort has been ongoing since 1984 when—because of budget cuts—we lost two floors from the plans for Pharmacy Hall when it was built. Now, the state of Maryland has shown its confidence in us by including the addition in the budget and moving the construction funds up.”

In early April, Gov. Martin O’Malley and the Maryland General Assembly approved \$62 million in the governor’s Fiscal Year 2009 capital budget for construction of the Pharmacy Hall addition.

With the approval of funding, the addition is on track to be completed in 2010. It will stand seven stories high and complement, not overshadow, Pharmacy Hall, built in 1983.

Powered by the need to turn out more pharmacists to supply the needs of an aging population, the case for more space is compelling. Two hundred new pharmacists are needed annually to meet Maryland’s needs. The School’s capacity has topped out with classes of 120 students annually, with 40 more students added last year through the School’s satellite program at the Universities at Shady Grove. Research awards to the School increased by 20 percent in Fiscal Year 2007, so more lab space is needed as well.

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Even if it’s just from the artist’s renderings, Eddington still likes to give a virtual tour. “The first floor will be dominated by a large lecture hall seating 200, a smaller hall seating 80, and plenty of study space for students where they can plug in their laptops,” she explains. “Students will also enjoy a kitchen area.”

The second floor, she says, also will feature a 200-seat and an 80-seat lecture hall, accompanied by a series of seminar rooms and a terraced garden that, enclosed in glass, will provide a crossover to Pharmacy Hall. “The building will be ‘learning-centered,’” promises Eddington.

The third floor will be comprised of the dean’s suite and a new pharmacy practice lab, which will feature 12 private booths where students can enhance their interviewing skills for patient consultations.

“Pharmacists’ roles are changing and pharmacists are becoming much more involved in direct patient care,” says Eddington. “Here, students will have the opportunity to learn to sit down with patients and to discuss their health issues and how to manage them correctly. We want to make certain that our students will have the skills necessary to allow them to be leaders in the profession.”

The Pharmacy Hall addition will help the next generation of students enter the profession with all of the tools they will need, whether those tools are interpersonal or those of bench science.

Floors four through seven will be devoted to research and lab space. The labs will be “open” in the sense that there will be no walls between individual labs and collaborations may be that much easier and more fruitful. Much of the work in the new labs will be devoted to new frontiers in pharmacy, such as pharmacogenomics, drug design and delivery, nanomedicine research, and other translational research.

“Lab space will be augmented by glassed-off areas in which students and postdocs can sit and do their write-ups—near to, but away from, the activity in the labs,” says Eddington.

“From SimMan (a life-size advanced patient simulator) to the informatics/patient interaction suite to the nanomedicine facility on the seventh floor, technology will be state-of-the-art. Aesthetics will not be lost as the building will have curtain walls that flare with expansive glass at the corners, where each conference room is located.

“Everyone is excited about this new building,” says Eddington. “And, there are so many people to thank.”

—*Randolph Fillmore*