

NEWS

UNIVERSITY OF SCRANTON

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UNIVERSITY TO BEGIN STUDENT CENTER EXPANSION PROJECT

SCRANTON--The University of Scranton will begin a \$6 million expansion and renovation of the Gunster Memorial Student Center to improve dining services and provide a centralized location for student activities and publications.

The first phase of work, which will consist of a 19,000 sq.-ft. addition to the rear of the building, is expected to begin Jan. 18. Most of the new space will be occupied by the dining services kitchen, food preparation and storage areas. The rear entrance will be closed and a new entrance will be opened off the Royal Way.

The parking lot off Mulberry Street behind Gunster will be closed during this phase of the project. However, delivery access from Mulberry Street to the library and Gunster will remain open during construction. Parking for University-sponsored evening events in the Gunster Center will be available in Lot J on Monroe Avenue at the corner of Mulberry Street.

The Student Center's existing second and third floors will be remodeled. Part of the second floor will become a Student Activities Center to serve as headquarters for the Student Activities Office, and various student organizations and publications. The rest of that floor and the entire third floor will be redesigned student dining areas that will feature a food court and new lighting and seating.

The project is timely, according to James T. Bryan, Ed.D., vice president for student affairs, who noted that the building's dining area was designed when about 750 students were on the meal plan.

A three-fold increase in students buying meals at Gunster has occurred while University enrollment has remained constant at 3,700 undergraduates and is due to an increase in the number of students living on campus and the number of commuting students using campus food services.

"We are feeding three times the students we once did, without any substantial increase in support areas," Bryan said. "The food is good, but our physical limitations have prevented us from providing certain things. The improvements we are planning will have an impact on meals that students should notice."

"Many schools realize that food is an important factor in students' adjustment to the campus and in their attitudes toward University life," he added.

Students can look forward to a new dining experience, according to Jim Burns, director of dining services. He said the main dining area will move from the second to the third floor where a food court will be developed.

The food court will serve three meals daily from eight stations devoted to various specialties or concepts: chicken, pasta, pizza, deli, grill, health-conscious, dessert and a walk-up station where students can prepare their own dish.

Aesthetic improvements include elevated booths, round and oblong tables, and new lighting. The food court will be topped by a peaked skylight.

The third floor of Gunster now contains the Pocono Northeast Room, which hosts special events and small functions. Burns said it probably will continue to serve in this capacity for evening events after the renovations.

The second floor, meanwhile, will provide more specialized dining services; perhaps, for example, a menu for health-conscious people or one that includes gourmet meals. Burns noted that the University is considering a flexible meal plan whereby students could pay an extra fee on a per-meal basis for items such as steak or lobster.

A major goal of the expansion project is increased seating. There are now 630 seats in the dining areas for about 2,300 resident students. Another 350 commuters, faculty and staff members purchase a meal on an average day, usually lunch. The expansion will result in nearly 1,000 seats on the second and third floors.

"It should eliminate the problem of people waiting for a seat during our busy periods at lunchtime and around 5:30 p.m.," Burns said.

All facilities, including serving stations, will be accessible to the disabled.

Antico Group Services, a food service design consultant based in Glen Cove, N.Y., and Leung Hemmler Camayd, architects for the project, helped develop the dining services plan.

A new Student Activities Center will occupy the front section of the building's second floor. It will include offices for the director of student activities and his assistant, space for students working on various projects, a Leadership Development Center, offices for Student Government, and offices and equipment for student publications — "The Aquinas," "Windhover," "Esprit" and "Grapevine."

"We need a facility to match the increase in our programs and activities and to serve students and the community more effectively," Bryan said.

The Student Center expansion began to take shape in the fall of 1990, according to Glenn Pellino, vice president for planning, and was approved by the board of trustees at its meeting last summer. The project will be completed in stages with the addition to the building and the third floor dining area scheduled to open in the fall of 1993. The other renovations and the second floor dining area are to be completed in early 1994.

"This is a tricky project because the building has to remain open with minimal disruption to the operations of the food service and student activities," Pellino said.

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