

Montclair State University plans to build business, science academic buildings in Little Falls

Montclair State University, a frequent college choice among City students seeking higher education, will break ground next month on the construction of two state-of-the-art academic buildings on its campus which carry with them a combined \$102 million price tag.

The two buildings, a new school of business facility and a center for environmental sciences, are slated for completion during the spring of 2015. Additionally, the capital project will include a series of information technology improvements.

According to MSU officials, the majority of the project, about \$94 million, will be funded by the state. The partial funding is part of the \$750 million "Building Our Future" Bond Act which was approved by voters in November of last year.

The bond act represents the first major state capital investment in university and college facilities in more than a quarter of a century, according to a MSU release.

In announcing the list of funded projects funded by the bond act, Gov. Chris Christie said the capital improvements would help the state's colleges and universities remain competitive while retaining top students. He added that the measure will help make New Jersey colleges "more attractive research partners" for industries planning to bring quality jobs and businesses into the area.

"This substantial and catalytic investment by the state will greatly benefit both New Jersey's students and economy by building upon critical areas of expertise and excellence that reside in our strong, high-demand programs in business and the sciences," said MSU president Susan Cole, adding that the project will create 1,500 construction and support jobs that she believes will boost the local economy. "These are urgently needed facilities."

At an estimated cost of \$55 million, the 107,500 square-foot center for environmental sciences aims to expand the school's science and research infrastructure by 50 percent through cutting-edge labs and classrooms. The new facility will host programs involving sustainability science, pharmaceutical biochemistry, medicinal chemistry as well as biological, computing and mathematical courses.

The \$66 million, 143,000 square-foot school of business will replace the facility which currently houses its business programs and feature a 150-seat lecture hall as well as high-tech classrooms and computer labs. The new building will also boast market research labs and its own financial trading floor.

"Capital improvements such as these are essential to the future of Montclair State and of all New Jersey's great institutions of higher learning," Cole said. "These projects herald a new era for Montclair State and for higher education in New Jersey."

The new buildings, both of which are technically located in Little Falls, will not only boost the college's academic programs, they may also serve as a draw for current and upcoming Clifton High School students.

Suzanne Bronski, MSU's director of media relations, said the university has had an initiative in place with CHS that provides its high-performing juniors and seniors the opportunity to become acquainted with the academic rigors of college while simultaneously accumulating college credit.

"These students, who can take a maximum of two general education courses per semester, are invited to attend our new student orientation day each August to get a preview of the campus and a feel for college life," Bronski said.

Over the last three years, 46 CHS students have participated in the program, she said.

According to Bronski, 721 of MSU's total enrollment were from Clifton in fall of 2012. The school's total undergraduate enrollment is currently 14,432 students.

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