

Montclair State University breaks ground for new science and business buildings

The building boom that has transformed Montclair State into the state's second largest university is continuing as officials on Wednesday broke ground for new science and business buildings – projects totaling more than \$121 million.

The bulk of funding for the project, nearly \$94 million, is coming from a state bond approved by voters in the fall. The referendum authorized \$750 million in borrowing for building and renovation at colleges and universities statewide.

The new construction at Montclair is scheduled to be completed by spring 2015 and will join a host of other building projects that have allowed enrollment to grow by more than a third – to 19,500 students – in the last 15 years. Only Rutgers University is bigger in New Jersey.

Montclair President Susan A. Cole called passage of the bond act – the first for higher education in a generation – “a lesson in perseverance.”

“It was a long and arduous journey,” Cole said. However, even without state money, Cole has presided over a veritable building boom at Montclair during her tenure, which began in 1998. The university has relied on borrowing and private fundraising to expand the campus, including building a number of dorms that have significantly increased the residential population to 5,000 students.

“This is a lesson for everybody: Don't mess with Dr. Cole,” Assemblyman Ralph Caputo, D-Belleville, said. “When she wants something she gets it.”

Caputo was among a group of local politicians assembled for the groundbreaking, including officials from Montclair. However, though invited, leaders from Clifton and Little Falls didn't attend, according to the university. The bulk of the campus lies in those towns which have complained about the parking, traffic and other concerns associated with the university's rapid growth.

The campus also is home to a New Jersey Transit train station, an ice rink used by the public, and a minor league baseball stadium for the New Jersey Jackals.

Like the other projects on campus, the new buildings are designed in the university's signature Mission-style, featuring white exteriors and red-tile roofs.

Montclair was among the first schools to actually break ground using the proceeds of the state bond money. The school this summer awarded a \$102 million contract to Terminal Construction Corp. of Wood-Ridge to provide general contractor services for both buildings, expected to generate 1,500 construction and support jobs.

The \$55-million, 107,500-square-foot Center for Environmental and Life Sciences will expand the university's science classrooms and research labs by 50 percent, the school said.

At 143,000-square-feet, the School of Business building is projected to cost \$66-million and feature a 150-seat lecture hall, classrooms and computer labs, as well as market research/analysis labs and a financial trading floor.

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