

## **NWACC plans to break ground on Springdale campus late summer**

NorthWest Arkansas Community College officials said Monday (March 26) they plan to break ground on a \$10 million to \$12 million campus in Springdale in late summer, with an eye on opening the doors to Phase I by the fall 2019 or spring 2020 at the latest.

Dr. Evelyn Jorgenson, president for the Bentonville community college, said the plan has been in the works while speaking during the unveiling of an early rendering to Springdale city planning officials at their annual work session.

Phase 1 will be a 35,000-square-foot, two-story structure with the potential for expansion on both sides. Hight Jackson Associates, the Rogers firm that designed Burns Hall at the flagship campus in Bentonville, is designing the project. The first building will have 12 classrooms, science labs, testing center, event center as well as a commons area and early college experience offices. Jorgensen anticipates about 1,500 to 2,000 students will attend the new campus when completed. She said about 40% of the college's enrollment comes from Washington County.

The college now leases classroom space in Springdale and at Farmington High School, but those classes will be moved to the new campus when it opens.

"We feel like this Springdale campus will draw students from further south of Fayetteville and Siloam Springs and our enrollment will grow," she said. "The only caveat to that is the rise in online learning as more and more student are desiring to take classes online. It's the fastest area of growth for us and many other colleges and universities."

She said the new campus will also offer nursing degrees, have simulation labs for the nursing program, and an emergency medical technician and other health service degrees and certificates.

"We know the demand is there for health professions and this campus is addressing those needs," she added. "As demand dictates there are plans to expand the Springdale campus with at least two more buildings at some point in the future."

Jorgenson said the NWACC Foundation will raise money for the expansion and the college will purchase the building from the foundation via payments to be determined later. Annetta Tirey, executive director of development for the NWACC Foundation, said about one-third of the funds have been raised and the foundation will announce a new fundraising goal at the groundbreaking this summer, as the scope of the project has changed a bit over the past few years.

The NWACC board of trustees approved the Springdale campus in August 2015. At that time, Jorgenson said the goal was to raise about \$11.5 million to cover construction costs, with an estimated \$500,000 needed to furnish the building – funding that would be raised by private donations. The college purchased the 20-acre tract on the west side of Arvest Ballpark in October 2014 for \$2.4 million from Philip Taldo. The original building was estimated at 50,000 square feet. The college will begin smaller at 35,000 square feet with opportunity to expand as needed. In 2015, college officials originally hoped to open the Springdale campus by 2018, dependent on fundraising.

Jorgenson said the state law does not allow funding of community college building projects. But the legislature did recently authorize community colleges to build dormitories. She said housing options would be a longer term project but didn't rule it out given the community college offers programs not available elsewhere in the state such as Brightwater Culinary School and Construction Technology.

The original plans called for a workforce training center at the Springdale campus, but that was added in Bentonville and won't likely be duplicated given the cost involved, Jorgenson said.

The preliminary rendering showed to the Springdale Planning Commission indicate the Phase I building will face northeast to be more visible from the intersection of Watkins Avenue and South 56th Street across the road from Arvest Ballpark and a neighbor to Arkansas Children's Hospital that opened last month.

Jorgenson said the Bentonville Campus is 26 years old and has grown from one building – Burns Hall – to six buildings, including a multi-story, \$14.2 million health professions center. She said the Springdale campus will be a modern facility and though small to start, the college and foundation are committed to expanding as demand dictates.

0 comments