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Work in Progress

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Work in Progress

Several renovation projects near completion and the new classroom building moves closer to launch.

Story by **RACHEL HATCH** Photos by **MARC FEATHERLY**

For the past several months, the Illinois Wesleyan campus has been literally buzzing with construction activity.

The Joyce Eichhorn Ames School of Art Building and Presser Hall (home to the School of Music) are receiving major renovations. Further north, the University's Wilder Field, home field of the Titan football team, was surfaced with artificial turf. And, in the heart of campus, demolition began of Sheean Library, vacant since 2002, to make room for a new, 48,700-square-foot classroom building.

Much of the funding for these projects came from the ongoing *Transforming Lives: The Campaign for Illinois Wesleyan University*, that runs through 2014. While 80 percent of the campaign's \$125 million goal is designated for student scholarships and faculty and program endowments, the remaining 20 percent is dedicated to building and refurbishing projects. The following summarizes construction in progress.

New Classroom Building



Architects continue to refine plans for a new classroom building at the same time that fundraising for the project shifts into high gear.

In May, the Illinois Wesleyan Board of Trustees approved soliciting bids for the state-of-the-art building, designed by Shepley Bulfinch — the same architectural firm that designed The Ames Library and the renovation of the Hansen Student Center.

Workers began tearing down Sheean Library to make room for the new classroom building.

the classroom,” says University President Richard F. Wilson. “This building will provide general education classrooms worthy of the kind of teaching and learning that goes on at Illinois Wesleyan.”

“At the heart of everything we do as a liberal arts university is

Bringing students, professors and technology together in a framework designed for the 21st century, the building is estimated to cost \$15 million. Through the campaign, \$13 million has been raised so far, which includes a \$10 million anonymous pledge.

Wilson has declared his intent to avoid debt in construction of the new building, which will replace Shaw Hall as the main instructional facility on campus. The building's top floor will serve as the new home for the Departments of Business Administration and Economics. Construction will remain on hold until the additional \$2 million in gifts are secured.

Demolition began this summer of Sheean Library. Much of the concrete building will be recycled. The design of the new classroom building follows sustainable methods of construction under guidelines for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). This will be the second building on campus constructed in a manner consistent with LEED standards: The Minor Myers, jr. Welcome Center was dedicated a LEED-certified building in 2009. Like the Welcome Center, the classroom building will be supported by a geothermal system.

University officials hope that the fundraising goal will be reached over the next four months and that construction on the classroom building could begin in late fall or early spring.

Ames School of Art Building

The Joyce Eichhorn Ames School of Art Building will have a new look this fall, complete with studio and office renovations and an entry designed to showcase the school. The new construction is made possible by a gift from B. Charles "Chuck" Ames '50 and Joyce "Jay" Eichhorn Ames '49.

Construction began in May on a more-than-2,400-square-foot glass rotunda and lobby for the art building's entrance, designed by CSO Architects and consultant R. Paul Bradley. The building, which is part of the Alice Millar Center for the Arts, houses classrooms and studios for painting, printmaking, photography, ceramics, graphics and other art activities. The building also accommodates the Merwin and Wakeley art galleries.



An architectural drawing of the new addition to the Ames School of Art.

"There is so much creativity and beauty in the work of those in the School of Art, and we wanted the exterior of the building to reflect that," says Jay, who was an art major at IWU, where she developed a lifelong passion for visual arts with professors such as former Art Department

Chairman Kenneth Loomis. “We want visitors to know, with one look, that this is the art building.”

The School of Art was named in honor of Jay in 1998, when her husband decided to surprise her on Valentine’s Day with an endowment gift to the University. The Ameses, longtime supporters of the University, are honorary chairs of the *Transforming Lives* campaign. The couple is responsible for major gifts that include a challenge to raise money for the construction of The Ames Library, which opened in 2002. They also made history in 2009 with a \$25 million gift for the Wesleyan Fund and faculty endowments, the largest in the University’s history.

Renovations to the School of Art through the Ames’ gift will also include much of the first floor outside the Merwin and Wakeley art galleries. “This will provide more room and an inviting atmosphere for the many gatherings, openings and receptions for artists held near the galleries,” says Roger Schnaitter, former associate provost, who has served as a University liaison for recent construction projects in academic buildings.

To accommodate the new lobby, faculty offices will relocate to the second floor. Four current instructional studios will also be revamped into three larger, more spacious studios for students.

The University expects the instructional studios and faculty offices to be ready before the start of the 2011 fall semester, with the rest of the project completed soon after.

Presser Hall



Improvements at the School of Music included new stage curtains for Westbrook Auditorium.

Changes over the past several months for Presser and the adjacent annex have included a new curtain and new carpet for Westbrook Auditorium, new desks and chairs for a classroom, new carpets throughout large sections of both buildings, new draperies, new furniture in the Reception Room and in the “Pit,” some new light fixtures, and new paint throughout many of the spaces in both buildings — all of which will give the 82-year-old building a fresh look.

The renovations are about more than aesthetics, says Pelusi, who sees the interior improvements as an investment in the School of Music’s future. “Maintaining and upgrading interior furnishings have a direct positive impact on the daily work of students, faculty and staff, as well as on our efforts to attract prospective students.”

Coyner Smith was a music major who left IWU to join the U.S. Navy. After his time in the armed forces, Smith established a successful business equipment company in Omaha, Neb. He never forgot his music roots at Illinois Wesleyan and even composed the music and lyrics of all the commercials for the company, Better Business Equipment.

As time passes, music can come to be regarded as “classic.” The same can be said for buildings.

One of the University’s classic buildings is Presser Hall, which has been a campus landmark since it was built in 1929. The stately, redbrick structure houses the School of Music and also Westbrook Auditorium, which hosts 100 concerts and recitals each year and is the official site of University convocations.

“A number of spaces in our facilities are visited often by members of the public,” says Mario Pelusi, director of the School of Music, “so it is important for the University to do all that it can to present a positive image in those facilities.”

For years, Presser Hall stood in a figurative line, waiting for internal refurbishing projects that were ultimately set on hold. When money did become available, repairs of necessity, such as new windows, trumped replacing aging carpet or creaking chairs.

Presser is finally getting its long-awaited makeover thanks to a gift to the *Transforming Lives* campaign from Coyner Smith ’54 and his wife, Donna.

Smith says he and Donna were compelled to give in 2008 when fire damaged the Phi Mu Alpha music fraternity house. That gift led to his discovery of the need for improvements to Presser. In addition, the couple has established an endowed merit scholarship as well as annually funded scholarships.

Wilder Field and Neis Field

After 116 years of playing football on grass at Wilder Field, the Titan football team will open the season Sept. 3 against Hope College playing on a new artificial-turf field.

“In the last few years, as artificial turf fields evolved in quality and more schools were installing them, we started to consider turf for Illinois Wesleyan,” says Athletic Director Dennie Bridges ’61. “Our first concern was the safety of the athlete, so a good deal of investigation went into that aspect of the changeover. All evidence now is that there is no difference in the safety of an artificial surface as opposed to grass.”



Wilder Field will become “both a game field and a practice field; and, with lights, there are so many more hours of use,” says Athletic Director Dennie Bridges.

Bridges adds, “A driving factor in our decision was our substandard practice field. The artificial turf field becomes both a game field and a practice field; and, with lights, there are so many more hours of use.”

Football is not the only sport that is positively affected by the installation of artificial turf at Wilder Field. “Women’s and men’s soccer will practice there often to lessen the stress on the grass soccer field and softball and baseball will be able to hold early spring workouts before their fields are ready for use,” says Bridges. “We will also hold intramural activities on the field and, as opportunities allow, we will rent the field to high schools and camps.”

The expanded use of Wilder Field’s artificial turf, Bridges says, “will take lots of pressure off of the Activity Center in the Shirk Center, which benefits the entire student body looking for recreational space.”

An anonymous donation to the *Transforming Lives* campaign facilitated the field installation, which is estimated to cost between \$950,000 and \$1 million. The average field can last about 10 years. According to Bridges, President Wilson had one requirement before construction of the new turf began: to have funds in place for a replacement field. The needed funding was contributed by several alumni and friends, including Steve Lanter, whose son Bo graduated from IWU in May after making second team all-conference as a running back.

Lanter, who is chairman and CEO of Lanter Delivery Systems in St. Louis, says both he and his son came away with something from Bo's days at Illinois Wesleyan. "We're relationship people," says Lanter, who often rented an RV to drive up and attend his son's football games. He says it was easy to bond with the other football parents, and he and Bo plan to return for Homecomings at IWU. "The [football] parents are planning their own get-together," Lanter says. "Along with a great education, Bo and I have gained lifelong friends."

Another of Wesleyan's athletic fields, Neis Soccer Field, is also receiving an upgrade this summer. "A \$60,000 press box is being constructed to allow us to house a permanent sound system and to give us a location for future video-streaming," says Bridges, who adds, "Soccer was our only field without a press box." Funding for the press box was provided by a major donor, whose name will be announced in the fall, and from contributions by soccer parents and former soccer players.

The IWU construction crew also built team rooms in the "Green Shed" north of Neis Field. "The team rooms turned out to be even better than we hoped and gives our soccer teams an out-of-the-weather meeting room before games and at halftime," Bridges says.