

UCF's New Buildings Increase Space and Energy Efficiency

As construction continues with nearly \$64 million in new projects set in motion, it seems UCF really may be under construction forever — or at least for the foreseeable future.

UCF has multiple construction projects underway around campus including Classroom II, student housing, Greek homes and a satellite Recreation and Wellness Center.

Classroom II is an underway project expected to be finished fall 2013 and will be built to adhere to the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design standards for energy efficiency. This means Classroom II, as well as all other UCF building construction, will have better air quality, water usage and energy efficiency.

According to UCF Sustainability, these new improvements are estimated to save 20 to 40 percent of energy and water consumption compared to baseline buildings.

Ashley Hodas, a senior studying health sciences, said she's glad UCF is keeping energy efficiency in mind with its new construction.

"I'm really excited that UCF is working towards building more energy-efficient buildings," Hodas said. "Being one of the largest schools in the nation, we can set the tone for other schools to follow suit."

Gene Kruckemyer, news editor and writer for UCF News and Information, said in an email that Classroom II will be a three-story building, built to accommodate more students as well as general-purpose classrooms and is located between Classroom I and the Psychology Building. It will have seven lecture halls ranging from 130 to 450 seats, and will be nearly 80,000 square feet, as there is a need for additional classroom instruction space. Up to this point, the current buildings only have about 12 or 13 rooms on campus that hold more than 100 students, said Brian Boyd, the university's registrar.

Kiara Guzman, a senior health sciences major, sees the benefits of the new construction.

"Since I'm a health sciences major, I am always taking classes that are held in big lecture rooms filled with students," Guzman said. "The addition of new classrooms with more seats will definitely be beneficial, especially if a class I want to take is full. Maybe now there will be more likely of a chance that a space will open up for me in the future."

Additionally, within Classroom II there will be more office and support space. The buildings' third floor will house the Air Force ROTC offices, and the second floor will house the Army ROTC offices. There will be a military history library and a "virtual battle lab" for simulations. The construction of this new building is costing the university \$23.4 million, Kruckemyer said.

Col. Todd Freece, commander of the Air Force ROTC at UCF, explained the ROTC's excitement for the new building.

"We are very excited for the opportunity to move into a more permanent facility," Freece said. "We have been based in trailers over the last 15 years, and it allows our students to be more centrally located on campus. It also demonstrates a real, concrete level of commitment from the university and the state to supporting the Army and Air Force, and we look forward to it."

In addition to Classroom II, UCF is building a new residential village, Academic Villages II, which will be next to the original Academic Villages on the southern side of campus. According to UCF Facilities Planning and Construction, this building will consist of three residence halls — for a total of 672 beds — as well as a support building, costing the university about \$39 million, Kruckemyer said. The three-building addition is scheduled to be completed by late summer, the same time a new 1,030-space parking garage is expected to open for the Academic Villages.

Douglas Woodrow, a freshman studying computer science, understands the need for more housing.

"When I was accepted to live on campus, I was so excited," he said. "I know that it is difficult to get on-campus housing because of all of the incoming students, so more housing definitely wouldn't hurt. More students will now be able to experience dorm life than ever before at UCF. I know that thus far, I definitely would not trade it in for off-campus housing."

He also expressed his feelings toward the expansion.

"I definitely support classroom expansion for the additional areas of education," he said.

UCF's first LEED Gold building is the Physical Sciences building located near Memory Mall.

According to UCF Sustainability, the construction of newer, greener buildings is easier and more cost effective than retrofitting an existing building. All of UCF's new construction on campus now adheres to the LEED standards for energy efficiency.

UCF's fraternity and sorority row is growing, too. Two new Greek residence homes as well as a Greek life center are being built near Alafaya Trail and Gemini Boulevard. These buildings will be owned by the university and maintained by the Department of Housing and Residence Life. The new houses will be occupied by Chi Omega and Kappa Kappa Gamma and are scheduled for completion this fall, joining the 11 other Greek houses on campus, Kruckemyer said.

Scheduled to open this semester in Knights Plaza, a new satellite Recreation and Wellness Center is being built and will feature 1,840-square-feet of exercise and fitness space. About \$1.2 million saved during the construction of the campus' larger center is being used to build this smaller venue, Kruckemyer said.

Being built just across McCulloch Road from the UCF campus and Bright House Networks Stadium, NorthView student housing complex will be the UCF area's newest student apartment community.

Scheduled to open fall 2013, NorthView will allow students to pay rent by semester to their student accounts located in myUCF. Student financial assistance, such as grants, scholarships and loans, can also be used to pay for NorthView, Kruckemyer said.

One expected addition that students won't be seeing on campus in the near future is the organic grocery store, which was proposed in July 2012, but decided against by UCF in December 2012.