It’s one smart building

By Kevin Miller

Back behind the Women’s Building and north of shiny new Austin Hall, a showcase of Oregon State’s commitment to help lead the way to more effective teaching is taking shape.

The first building in OSU’s modern era whose main purpose is to provide classroom space for students in all disciplines, the $65 million, 130,000-square-foot Learning Innovation Center (“LInC” is its official abbreviation, pronounced “link”) promises to become one of the most heavily used and closely studied structures in campus history. State bonds issued to finance the building will be paid off with tuition money.

Once it opens in fall 2015, on a typical school day some 2,200 students could be in classrooms in the LInC at once, and another 600 could study there in a wide variety of smaller, formal and informal learning environments. That’s more than 10 percent of the students on the main campus.

At the LInC’s heart will be a massive, yet intimate, 600-seat auditorium-in-the-round known as the Arena. Ringed with elevated, curved projection screens to allow students sitting anywhere in the room to see multimedia presentations as well as most of their classmates’ faces, it’ll be built so no one sits more than 40 feet from the instructor.

A leader of the effort to design and build the LInC to stay on the cutting edge of effective learning for decades to come is Becky Warner, senior vice provost for academic affairs. An award-winning sociology teacher with 24 years at Oregon State, she has taught in many classroom configurations, ranging from large auditoriums to small group settings.

Warner coordinates the work of an OSU team and a group from Portland’s Boora Architects. She recalled one of her first conversations with the architects:

“They looked at me and said, ‘How will you know the building is a success?’”

Her response: The LInC will be a winner if the learning that happens inside it has an immediate, measurable impact on the university’s retention rate for first-year students and its 6-year graduation rate, and if similar positive impacts can be proven in coming decades. She’s thrilled at the early results of an intense collaboration between the on-campus experts and the off-campus architects and builders.

“We did a lot of research,” Warner said. “We went out and became scholars of learning as a group. For example, we looked at things like eye contact, and at what distance you lose eye contact, and we designed a building that minimizes the loss of eye contact.”

The building will feature a learning “test kitchen” or “sandbox” on its fourth floor, with teaching space that can easily go through wholesale design changes every year or two as OSU teachers try new ideas. It will also house the University Honors College, the Integrated Instructional Resource Center and other units that support innovative teaching.

In addition to the Arena and many other innovative classroom spaces, the LInC also will be notable for something it doesn’t have. There will be no interior corridors, so that classrooms fill the heart of each floor and passageways and social and study areas are on the outside, with a largely glass facade affording great views and plenty of natural light.

“There’ll be hundreds of ways to learn in this building,” Warner said.
UPCOMING EVENTS

There’s always something going on in Beaver Nation. As we think ahead into next year, be sure to mark the following events on your calendar.

**State of the University**
Portland | Oregon Convention Center
Jan. 30
Join Oregon State University President Edward J. Ray as he provides a compelling update on the university’s significant worldwide accomplishments in the past year.
More information: osualum.com/sou

Bend | The Riverhouse Hotel and Convention Center
April 30
The State of the University in Bend will highlight the expansion of OSU-Cascades and describe how it will have an even greater educational, economic and community impact in Central Oregon.
More information: osualum.com/soubend

**OSU Community Day of Service**
Nationwide | Currently seeking work sites
May 16
Join Beaver Nation in giving back by volunteering for worthy causes across the country. We are seeking lead volunteers and work sites at this time.
More information: osualum.com/service

**Golden Jubilee**
Corvallis | CH2M HILL Alumni Center
June 5 to 6
The classes of 1965, 1960, 1955, 1950, 1945 and 1940 return to campus for this reunion event.
More information: osualum.com/reunions

**Spring Awards**
Corvallis | CH2M HILL Alumni Center
April 24
When Oregon State celebrates its stars, we all shine a little brighter. Help us honor the achievements of three great members of Beaver Nation.
More information: osualum.com/springawards