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Clemson gets busy with buildings

Research, renovation projects made possible by variety of fund sources

By Anna Simon • Pickens County News • May 18, 2010

CLEMSON — Red clay and yellow earthmovers at Clemson University's Innovation Center near Anderson and a green light for the Lee Hall project on campus signal a go for summer construction projects on Clemson's growing academic and economic development fronts.

Grading and site work recently started for the approximately 43,000-square-foot Innovation Center at Clemson's Advanced Materials Center in Anderson County. It is designed in large part to nurture new advanced materials-related businesses and move fruits of university research to the marketplace.

Construction is expected to be completed early next year.

The \$9 million building, to be shared by Clemson and the South Carolina Research Authority, "will be the epicenter for advanced materials-related jobs in the Upstate," said John Ballato, associate vice president for research and economic development at Clemson.

The location, right off I-85, adjacent to Clemson's Advanced Materials Research Laboratory and 10 minutes from the main campus, will be a lure for companies, particularly in advanced materials, that would create high-paying knowledge-sector jobs, Ballato said.

Clemson's \$6 million piece of the project, slowed by state budget woes and now on again, includes about 25,000 square feet of space that can be leased to start-up companies or other businesses associated with Clemson research, said Sandra Woodward, a Clemson spokeswoman.

"Providing office and laboratory space for fledgling companies that want to start businesses and create jobs based on university discoveries is an exciting prospect" said Chris Przirembel, Clemson's vice

president for research and economic development.

The South Carolina Research Authority piece includes about 18,000 square feet for secure research labs. The remaining square footage includes a common area and collaboration space.

Funding for the complex is through a public-private partnership that includes Advance SC, the Duke Energy Foundation, federal agencies and South Carolina Research Infrastructure Act funds, in addition to Clemson and SCRA.

Harper Corp. of Greenville is the design/build contractor on the project, with Goodwyn Mills and Cawood Inc. serving as architect of record.

Clemson's \$31.6 million expansion and renovation of Lee Hall, a crowded 1950s-era building, will also begin this summer, with funding from federal and private money. It is the only major building project at Clemson not halted by the recent economic downturn.

"There will be space for expanded activities and more space for the students who have been sitting on top of each other for years now," said David Allison, a professor in Clemson's School of Architecture, which was facing accreditation issues because of the state of the facility.

The expansion and renovation will meet U.S. Green Building Council Leadership in Energy Design, or

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LEED, standards, and make this a “building that teaches,” Clemson President James Barker said at a recent groundbreaking for the 55,000-square-foot expansion at the south end of the existing building.

“In it, students will learn from their teachers, from each other and from the building itself, because the new Lee Hall will be a model of sustainable design for the 21st century,” Barker said.

The renovation and restoration portion of the project qualified for federal stimulus support, which “allowed us to get under way despite a weak economy and state funding cuts,” Barker said.

Lee Hall houses Clemson's graduate and undergraduate programs in architecture, art, city and regional planning, construction science and management, landscape architecture and real estate development, and a doctoral program in environmental design and planning.

The architect is McMillan Pazdan Smith Architecture, based in Greenville, in association with Thomas Phifer and Partners of New York, with Thomas Phifer, a Clemson alumnus, serving as the design architect. Holder Construction Co., of Atlanta, is the construction manager.



Site work continues at the Clemson University Advanced Materials Center. (JOHN C. STEVENSON/Staff)

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