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Construction under way on two major HCC campus building projects

HOLYOKE — As construction nears completion on HCC's new Culinary Arts and Hospitality center in downtown Holyoke, two major building projects on the college's Homestead Avenue campus have just begun.

Construction fences went up around the perimeter of the Holyoke Community College Campus Center before the start of the fall semester. Tannery Brook, the stream that runs along the east side of the building and flows through campus on its way to the Connecticut River has been channeled underground through six-foot metal pipes and covered with tons of fill and dirt strong enough to support the heavy machines required to renovate the building during the two-year, \$43.5 million project.

Demolition on the interior and on exterior surfaces is under way. Work crews from Walsh Brothers Construction have been busy chipping, scraping, peeling, stripping and hauling away tons of concrete and other material. Eventually, the building's sloping surfaces will be squared off and the concrete façade covered with metal cladding to fix water leaks that have plagued the building since it opened in 1980.

"The main impetus is to get the building watertight," said Bill Fogarty, vice president of Administration and Finance, "but we also want to improve the operation of the building and bring together programs and departments that complement each other to make the Campus Center a real hub of student engagement."

Meanwhile, next door, construction has also started on the new HCC Center for Life Sciences, which will occupy about 7,500 square feet on the first floor of the adjacent Marieb Building. The \$4.5 million project, funded in part by a \$3.8 million grant from the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center, involves the creation of two state-of-the-art labs dedicated to biotechnology, genetics and microbiology, as well as lab prep areas, storage, and classroom space.

A key feature of the Center for Life Sciences will be the addition of an instructional "clean room" to train students to conduct experiments and research in sterile environments, the first of its kind in western

Massachusetts. The Center for Life Sciences is expected to be open by summer 2018 and ready for the fall 2018 semester.

In addition, HCC is already seeking funding from a variety of public and private sources to expand the Center for Life Sciences to encompass the entire three-story Marieb Building. The new center would provide updated facilities for biology, zoology, botany, veterinary technology and animal science, anatomy and physiology, forensic science, environmental science, and sustainability studies. "We've been encouraged to think big," Fogarty said.

On the Campus Center project, a descending exterior stairwell leading to the cafeteria entrance has been excavated, making space for what will eventually become an enclosed, two-story atrium off the HCC Courtyard. In the front of the building, exterior walkways on the second floor will be enclosed, adding a total of about 9,000 square feet to the 58,727 square-foot building.

Eventually, Tannery Brook will be returned to its natural state, above ground, and, with an assist from HCC students, the streambed planted with native vegetation.

When it's all done, a dedicated visitors parking lot will direct prospective students and their families over a new bridge crossing the brook and leading to a first floor Welcome Center, where they will find a new Admissions, Advising, and Testing suite. The second floor will feature updated and expanded dining facilities, a new Campus Store, lounge areas with charging stations, and a new Student Activities office. On the third floor, the Media Arts Center, home to HCC's Electronic Media and Photography programs, is being updated with new ductwork, lighting and ceilings.

The Campus Center is expected to reopen for the fall 2019 semester.

Construction on the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute, on the corner of Race Street and Appleton Street, is expected to be completed next month.