



## Friday Hall to be renovated, but first, animals must move out

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Professor David Webster looks around the museum, surrounded by antelope and rhinoceros heads, dozens of eerily lifelike bats, shrews, flying squirrels, stuffed ducks and birds.

As UNCW's curator of mammals, Webster has a daunting task ahead of him. He has to pack up and move the 15,000 critters, along with 1,000 bats and 15,000 fish floating in jars of alcohol. In all, some 75,000 specimens, including a prized, preserved plant collection, have to be emptied from the biology labs and moved to a 7,000 square foot trailer.

These mammals and reptiles fill the rooms and dimly lit hallways of the third floor of Friday Hall. They are tucked away under the eaves of the low ceilings in the attic-like labs. Friday hall is set to undergo a \$10 million, year-long renovation. So, the creatures have to leave the austere, hallowed hall and setup home temporarily in a humble trailer.

"How am I going to do it?" asked Webster. "That's a good question. It's a very big job. I sometimes wonder if the people in charge realize what we have to do here."

Webster has been teaching classes about mammals, marine biology and ecology at UNCW for 28 years. He proudly points out that UNCW has the third-largest museum collection in the southeast after the Universities of Florida and Georgia.

He understands the momentous task ahead of him. He opens cabinet drawers filled with stuffed pheasants, porcupines,



All photos Pete Corkey | THE SEAHAWK

**Due to the need to renovate Friday Hall, 75,000 animal specimens must be temporarily moved into a 7,000 square-foot trailer. UNCW has the 3rd largest museum collection in the southeast.**

snakes and endless varieties of mice. He slides out drawer-after-drawer of shrew skulls, tagged and catalogued.

Webster delights in showing off his amphibians and reptiles. He delights, too, in watching the squeamish reactions of curious onlookers, as they come face-to-face with the life size reptiles he pulls from the bins.

He loves talking and teaching about his creatures. After all, he has lived among them for decades.

But he is sobered by the huge project that lies ahead and his role as their protector. Thousands of specimens must be properly preserved, packed, unpacked, and then after the building's facelift, moved back to Friday

Hall.

"We have to be out by May 10," Webster said. "Actually, I've already started packing."

And he's figured out who his moving assistants will be. "Next semester in biology classes, I'll be training students in museum science and the art of packing," he said.

"Many of the moves in our campus buildings are done by prisoners from the county jail," he said. "But the prisoners aren't going to touch the collection. They can move the cabinets or lab tables, but students will handle the specimens."

"This collection is as valuable to us as a Van Gogh to someone else," he said.

But Webster is realistic about the need to renovate the outdated building. "The roof leaks every time it rains," he said.

Steve Sharpe, UNCW project manager for the renovation, said the leaky roof is a priority, in the \$10 million job. "We're going to install a new roof, sprinklers and new air conditioning," he said.

"The third floor is unique in that it houses collectibles, which are irreplaceable," Sharpe said. "We hope to improve air flow to better preserve the specimens."

Chairman of the Biology Department Martin Posey is excited about the renovation. "Friday Hall is clearly outdated," Posey said. "It needs so much work. When it's renovated, we'll have new, modern facilities."

"Yes, moving is a big job, but in this case, one that's well worth it," Posey said.

## In Memoriam of Dr. Thad Dankel

The Seahawk staff is sad to report that retired UNCW Mathematics professor Dr. Thad Dankel died last Thursday, Nov. 8 at Duke Medical Center at the age of 62. Dankel battled with polycystic kidney disease for seven years and received a successful kidney transplant this summer from donor and UNCW Student Media Coordinator Bill

DiNome. Dankel started teaching at UNCW in 1971 and serviced the UNCW community for over 30 years. He was also active with the Wilmington Concert Association, Wilmington Choral Society, and public radio station WHQR. On behalf of the entire Seahawk staff, our condolences go out to all of Dr. Dankel's family and friends.