

NEWS

New Highsmith opens after years of planning

BY CHRIS CARRERAS
Staff Reporter

After almost years of planning and construction, UNCA's Highsmith Union opens in time for the 2004 fall semester.

"This is a building for students," said Lloyd Weinberg, Coordinator for the Key Center for Service Learning, "I think the students deserve it and I'm glad they got it."

With only a few minor delays, construction was completed on time and fulfilled the planning staff's expectations. Many said that they were more than happy about the results of the new building.

"In terms of our expectations we actually had them exceeded, we've been really pleased with the building," said Kevan Frazier, the Director of the Highsmith Union project. "Everybody's really worked to make that happen."

The only major delay in the construction of the new Highsmith Union building occurred during the demolition of the old site. During the first few days of demolition, the crews discovered asbestos in the ceiling of the building and needed to remove all the material before continuing on the project.

"There was one significant delay on the front end. There was an unexpected layer of asbestos in the ceiling," said Frazier. "It wasn't a health hazard. It had just not been identified when they were doing the demolition plan, so that added some time to the project we had."

Using special equipment, the crews removed the asbestos during the night and managed to complete the construction and open the building on time, according to Frazier.

"Our goal was to open for the fall of 2004 and we opened in the fall of 2004," said Frazier. "We've never had anything like this in terms of scale on campus."

The Highsmith Union now houses many of the student offices which used to be scattered throughout campus. The Highsmith Union also contains several assembly rooms ranging from 400 square feet to 4000 square feet.

"The offices that moved here are the Career Center, the Center for Teaching and Learning, the multicultural student programs and all the student groups and organizations," said Rick Brothy, Assistant Director of the Highsmith Union project. "The Key Center, Campus Life and Student Activities are here and the catering function has been moved here."

Students as well as the faculty members praise the functionality and centralization the Highsmith Union brings to campus organizations. The layout of the building was designed so that these organizations can work with each other easily, streamlining



TYLER BREAU/PHOTO EDITOR

The newly opened Highsmith is a grand getaway for freshmen and returning students. The building boasts a game room, food court and convenience store.

communication between offices, making once complicated tasks easy and efficient, according to Frazier.

"It makes it much more accessible to know that all the administrative offices you need to get to would be in the same spot on campus," said Jennifer Marshall, senior math major. "It seems much better than the cafeteria offices."

Not only does the Highsmith feature many offices and businesses, it also has a

variety of leisure and entertainment sites as well. Wired for internet access, the building acts as a hub for student activity.

"I want this place to be a hangout spot. I don't want this to be just a place you go to study," said Brothy. "You can study here if you want to, but you can also hang out, chat and play games."

As the new building gains popularity, the goal of it becoming a hangout

spot for students and faculty becomes clearer. Even after the first few weeks of operation, the building looks to change from a deserted structure to an active student oriented center.

"I just think that it's wonderful that students now have a place to go," said Weinberg. "Between the food court, the convenience store, the book store and the alcoves they can hang out in it is just a great place. I think it is a privilege for me to be here, for my office to be here."

The food court's quality, variety and



TYLER BREAU/PHOTO EDITOR

The dining area in this post-modern student building creates a sophisticated, welcoming atmosphere.

prices contribute to the feeling that this building will be a success in attracting students and faculty. Serving dishes from sushi to skillet, as well as smoothies and coffees, the food court offers something for anyone who needs a snack before their next class or after a hard day of work.

"Thus far I have been to the little café thing, twice," said Marshall. "I like the sushi and I like the smoothies. I like the prices on everything, and I think that the food court offers a lot of variety."

With leisure as the focus of the building it isn't surprising to find that special attention goes to the planning of fun activities and events. With more and more students on campus the need for entertainment rises. The Highsmith meets this demand head-on giving students extra activities such as

Highsmith After Dark.

"Highsmith After Dark is an evening venture and the first time we did it ... we had laser tag, mini golf, movies, an oxygen bar and a dance party," said Frazier. "We just wanted something in every room in the building. The next one is on September 17."

As the popularity of the Highsmith Union increases so will advertising for events. The Student Life looks to catch the attention of students and experiments with advertising techniques to get more people into the Highsmith Union building, according to Frazier.

"The goal has always been that a student can just come over here," said Frazier. "There's always something going on over in Highsmith."

Voter registration becoming trendy among students

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around 16% of the total voting population in 2000.

"I think both presidential candidates are anxious to get the youth vote this term, with so many undecided voters out there," said Kenneth Betsale, Chair and Associate professor of political science. "If I was a young person, I'd be looking at both candidates to see which candidate offers the best future for them."

The Democratic and Republican National Conventions will serve as a large source of the nation's information on the major issues this election year. President Bush and Senator Kerry are both visiting as many of the areas with large numbers of undecided voters to try to influence the final decision of the voters.

"During the 1960's and '70's, it was mostly young people who drove the civil rights movement, drove the environment movement, drove the peace movement, drove the women's movement, and what we need to do is make some of the issues that matter to people voting issues again," said Senator Kerry during a visit to Boston University earlier this year.

This year, many different agencies and organizations attempt to reach out to younger voters. Everything from informa-

tional web sites to politically-based concerts aim to draw youth interest in politics between now and November. Locally, Pearl Jam and Death Cab for Cutie will perform in Asheville this October as a part of the MoveOn.org website's support of Senator John Kerry.

At a recent press conference on university admissions policies, Bush said, "I think it ought to be based upon merit." This was in response to questions of whether family legacy should be a considering factor in determining admittance to a university. At some universities applicants receive special consideration if a family member attended that particular institution.

"Well, in my case, I had to knock on a lot of doors to follow the old man's footsteps," said Bush.

Youth voter turnout looks positive this fall. "In October 2003, 39% of 17-24 year olds said they were absolutely certain they will vote in 2004," according to research by MTV's Rock the Vote organization. Close results in the last election encourage these organizations to seek the youth vote.

"I think young people are affected by the same issues that affect everybody, but the primary issue that faces young people today is economics. That is to say, will there

be a job waiting for young people when they leave the university," said Betsale.

Between private party advertisements and campaign messages sent out by the Republican and Democrat parties, the airwaves are full of varying messages to lure voters to the polls in November. Students need to take this information and decide which issues affect their lives and who will be the best candidate to resolve these issues.

"I think student voting is important. Students make up a large part of the population. Granted, we're in college now, but eventually we're going to be grown-ups. We're going to be in the business world. The decisions politicians make, though they might not affect us now, are going to definitely affect us in the future. It's something really important to start doing, because in four years, the politician that's in is going to affect us," said Rhiannon O'Conner, a senior political science major.

To be eligible to vote in the 2004 presi-

dential election you must be registered to vote by the appropriate deadline. Deadlines vary from state to state, but range from 13-30 days prior to the election, according to the United States Election Assistance Commission web site. The guidelines in North Carolina say an individual must be registered at least 25 days prior to the election.

Registration forms are available from local election officials, and voter outreach groups. Those wishing to register may also do so while applying for a driver's license, and at offices providing public assistance, state-funded programs for the disabled, and at armed forces offices. Additional

registration opportunities may be found at public libraries, post offices, and unemployment offices, according to the EAC.

Online registration opportunities to become a registered voter are also available. Downloadable registration forms may be found at www.RockTheVote.org and at www.EAC.gov/register.

Tuition

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Budget deficits for the state have led universities without funding for many academic programs, and thus "the legislature has been unable to award employees and faculty members in the UNC system salary increases," said Spellman.

The Board of Governors recommended an increase of \$900 per in-state student, and \$1800 per out-of-state student, over the next 3 years, to a total of \$225 for in-state and \$600 for out-of-state, with the total amount effective next year, said Spellman.

In addition to reducing the requested amount, the board issued a directive delegating funds received from the increase to three priority items before allowing the remainder to be used for salary increases, said Spellman.

The Board of Governors directed UNCA to use the funds as such: first, to reduce the size of classes, measured by the average student/faculty ratio; second, to increase the number of sections in undergraduate courses; third, to hire more full-time faculty members and decrease the number of adjunct professors, said Spellman.

Once these priorities are met, the Board of Governors directed the university to use the remaining funds to "take other actions as appropriate," said Spellman. This final category could include a number of actions, including potential salary increase, but such an increase would be nominal if any, said Spellman.

UNC system schools made a similar request for funding three years prior, and money was granted to nearly every school, said Spellman. UNCA was the only school in the system that did not use this funding to increase salaries, but instead used the money to fund Student Life and co-curricular projects, said Spellman.

Chancellor Mullen began the task force on tuition increase in the fall of 2003, as committees similar to the UNCA task force formed at most UNC system campuses, said Spellman.

Freshmen

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making us purchase equipment out of our own pockets to have more than our Internet access, but since then, they realized that they promised us Internet access," said Gibson.

Other students chose to remain on campus despite the lack of space.

"I'm currently living in the apartment in South Ridge," said Valerie Thelen, a freshman political science major. "I ended up getting the den that was converted into a bedroom. There's not really a lot of space in there. It's kind of an inconvenience to study there with two other suitemates having to walk through your room all the time. It has really made it difficult to get a lot of things done. Although the kitchen is nice, it's not really worth it."

Dining services had its own set of service problems before the freshman class arrived, according to Mike Nagorka, general manager of dining services. Nagorka worked to speed up the amount of time that students spent in the serving area over the summer by testing several different setups using visiting groups as test subjects.

"There were a couple of changes that were made, probably the most notable was the silverware relocation," said Nagorka. "We tried different setups from what our standard setup was last year to the setup we have now. We found that we moved people from nine people a minute through the serving area to almost 14 people a minute with the current arrangement. This proved to be a more functional arrangement."

Campus Police encountered its own problems in providing parking spaces for all students and faculty. Freshmen can now park only in specific parking lots and will receive tickets for parking in resident student lots. Campus Police designated two lots on Campus Drive and one lot off of W. T. Weaver Boulevard as parking lots for freshmen.

Steve Lewis, director of Campus Police, spoke about the possibility of freshmen not bringing their vehicles.