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Liberty University

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Changing face of Liberty

October 01, 2009

Liberty University has undergone many transformations since its founding in 1971 as enrollment has increased, all the while remaining true to its mission of Training Champions for Christ. In the past year, a steady stream of projects has dramatically changed the look and feel of LU’s campus, including an array of academic and facility upgrades.

“In recent years, Liberty has increased its spending on academic improvements far more than we have increased our tuition,” Chancellor Jerry Falwell, Jr. told students in an August convocation. “Much of what we did spend on athletic and recreational facilities has been covered by donations. Liberty is proud that we have spent so much on academics and other items that are essential to the learning experience and the everyday life of students on campus.”

Liberty University has spent more than $70 million on facility improvements in the past two years.

Nearly 90 percent of those improvements were intended to enhance the university’s learning atmosphere. Specifically, about $62 million was spent between July 2007 and August 2009 to upgrade classrooms, labs, campus infrastructure, academic support facilities, dining halls and dorms. During the same period, LU spent about $7.9 million to upgrade its athletics and recreational facilities.

“We have not borrowed a penny to make these campus improvements,” Falwell said. “God is truly blessing this university.”
The figures, contained in a recent report by the university’s financial planning and budgeting office, include only capital improvements and do not include operational costs such as the university’s new bus service or the annual faculty compensation increases that have occurred over the last eight years.

LU began the academic year with 11,773 residential students. For the past two years, LU has had to cut off resident enrollment when it met a predetermined goal. Enrollment management personnel are developing strategies to keep enrollment around the 11,800 mark this year, while requiring higher applicant GPAs and performance on SATs.

“Higher academic standards help to create a better learning environment for all students,” Falwell said. “That has to translate into a better education. It will result in graduates who have less trouble finding employment and are more likely to support the university when they leave. There will be a lot of benefits to Liberty University down the road.”

Liberty University Online enrollment is expected to top 50,000 students this academic year.

Falwell said LU was performing well financially even before the school’s online program grew so large, generating revenue surpluses in both the online and residential programs.

“One of our biggest goals two years ago was to begin building endowment at Liberty,” he said. “As a result of generous contributions and the efficient operation of both the residential and online programs, that endeavor has been hugely successful above and beyond our highest hopes.”

But when the stock market crashed and the economy soured, LU’s Board of Trustees decided it would be prudent for Liberty to invest a portion of the new endowment in itself.

Those investments continue. In addition to the $70 million spent on capital projects over the last two years, the university announced plans for a new performing arts theater, now under construction at Campus North, and a new stadium for Liberty’s soccer and track and field programs inside the Matthes-Hopkins Track Complex.

In addition to the Liberty Mountain Snowflex Centre (See Page 6), the projects outlined here have been on LU’s radar in the past six months. Several are now finished, and a few, such as the Performing Arts Center, are in the beginning stages. Each of these upgrades gives prospective students one more reason to choose LU.

**PERFORMING ARTS CENTER**

Theatre Arts students will soon have the spotlight they deserve. Construction of a new 600-seat theater is under way in the tower portion of Campus North, replacing the current theater that only seats 250. The expected completion date is April 2, 2010. Linda Nell Cooper, Theatre Arts director, said this year’s seniors are expecting to perform their last show in the new theater.
before they graduate. Meanwhile, fundraising efforts are in high gear, with many naming opportunities for donors. To help make the project a reality, consider donating to the theater by calling 1 (866) 602-7983.

**VCAR EXPANSION**

Liberty University’s Spiritual Life & Academic Building (SLAB) had extensive renovations this summer to accommodate the growth of the Visual Communication Arts (VCAR) program.

The program, which offers specializations in graphic design, studio art and art education licensure, started three years ago with 150 students. Now there are close to 400 declared VCAR majors. A spacious sculpture studio will permit students to undertake larger projects with a variety of materials, such as metal, clay, plaster and wood. Another studio will be used for ceramics classes where students can throw, glaze and fire pottery on wheels and kilns.

Additional classrooms will allow VCAR to expand the new art education licensure specialization, where future art teachers can practice techniques and skills they will use in K-12 educational settings. Workers also created a 30-by-38-foot gallery with 13-foot ceilings, track lighting and professional hanging system for student, faculty and professional art shows, such as the third annual artist series coming this fall. A grand opening took place on Sept. 24. The new art gallery will help Liberty’s VCAR program develop an art collection and enhance its on-campus, regional and national presence.
SEMINARY EXPANSION

Renovations in Campus North recently freed up 3,000 square feet for the rapidly growing Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, according to Laverne Smith, assistant to LBTS President Dr. Ergun Caner. The seminary gained study areas, faculty offices and storage.

LAW SCHOOL UPGRADES

The latest round of renovations at Liberty University School of Law included a café and lounge area for students, several study rooms and office space. Spanning two floors at Campus North, it improved about 9,000 square feet of the building. A previous renovation phase this summer created a network of offices for the law school’s Center for Career and Professional Development, its Externship Office as well as courtrooms and classrooms.

RESIDENCE HALL UPGRADES

Amid larger projects like Snowflex and the new bookstore, LU has not forgotten the details of daily life on campus. LU spent an estimated $1.4 million to renovate residence halls this summer. Workers replaced carpeting with vinyl flooring, added new windows in the Circle residence halls on Main Campus and did extensive bathroom renovations. Upgrades were made to windows, closets and bathroom flooring in halls on the Hill residences, and the Quads residence halls now have carpeting.

Safety features such as sprinkler systems and fire alarms were upgraded in most halls. Additionally, many residence halls now have “peep holes” so that students can see who is outside before opening the door to a visitor.

This safety feature was requested by students at a forum.
LIBERTY UNIVERSITY BARNES & NOBLE BOOKSTORE

The new Liberty University Barnes & Noble Bookstore across from Williams Stadium opened April 18. The two-story bookstore, at about 40,000 square feet, now holds 13,000 new general reading and reference titles, as well as a full service café that seats up to 65, with additional seating on an outdoor patio on the upstairs level.

Downstairs, there is a special entrance where students can order and pick up textbooks. Liberty alumni receive discounts in the new store, which also accepts the Reader’s Advantage discount cards.

THIRD FLOOR OF DEMOSS

Improvements continued on the third floor of DeMoss Hall this summer, including a new 1,800-square-foot networking lab, a high-tech software engineering lab, a smart classroom and a redesigned faculty research lab for the School of Engineering and Computational Sciences.

CAREER CENTER

The Liberty University Career Center has a more front-and-center profile at its new location on the first floor of the Arthur S. DeMoss Learning Center. The center moved in July to the former campus bookstore space. The area includes a receptionist section, conference rooms, furniture
build by Dave Morgan in LU’s cabinet shop, office space and a computer lounge, lab and library section, according to planning coordinator Bill Maitland. The Career Center offers numerous services to students, including internship access, career counseling, mock interviews, Washington, D.C. semesters, workshops and more. By Oct. 1, crews expect to have a new elevator installed next to the Career Center entrance.

WILLIAMS STADIUM

Williams Stadium, home to Liberty Flames football and host to the school’s graduation ceremonies, will be expanded from 12,000 to 30,000 seats over the next five years in a multiphase plan. Phase One will include the addition of 6,000 new seats and construction of a 34,000 square-foot brick- and glass-encased Jeffersonian-style tower on the west side of the stadium. The three-story press box building will include club seating and room for qualified Flames Club donors, 16 permanent luxury suites, a banquet room for up to 800 people, classroom space for up to 1,000, a high quality Division 1 press box and new elevators. Phase Two and Three will add a new 4,000-seat mid-deck for the east side of the stadium and 6,400 seats in a horseshoe-shaped area, in the end zone, surrounding the visitor’s locker room and the south end zone. The renovated facility will ready the stadium for construction of upper decks on both the west and east sides in the future. The long-range vision is to expand the stadium to hold 60,000 fans. Construction is slated to begin immediately after the conclusion of the 2009 home football season. A new state-of-the-art HD scoreboard was installed this summer with a 24-foot tall high-definition video screen that can be also used for student activities, such as movie nights. The board’s video screen, at 88 feet wide, featuring a traditional scoreboard and tri-vision sponsorship panels, is more than twice the size of the previous video board rented by the university each season.

Read the article about the Williams Center renovation.

VINES CENTER

The Vines Center, home to the men’s and women’s basketball programs and volleyball, will be expanded from 8,000 seats to 11,000 for athletic contests and 12,000 for convocation. Plans call for the addition of columns and a brick façade, along with a 3,000-seat balcony when the renovation is complete in five to 10 years. “The Vines Center upgrade is another step in a tremendous commitment by Liberty University to its athletics department. Once completed, the Vines Center will become one of the better buildings around the country for basketball,” said Men’s Basketball Head Coach Dale Layer.

Read the article about the Vines Center renovation.
OSBORNE STADIUM

Fans of Liberty track and field and men’s and women’s soccer can expect big changes this fall. The Matthes-Hopkins Track Complex, which also houses the Liberty Soccer Field, is receiving new stadium seating. Named in honor of two of the donors, graduate Richard Osborne and his wife, Karin, the stadium will seat 868 Flames fans for future NCAA men’s and women’s soccer games and track meets. Surrounded by brick and wrought-iron fencing, Osborne Stadium will also feature a new scoreboard, as well as a two-story, 5,000-square-foot operations center with coaching staff offices, locker rooms, a training room and a team room.

THOMAS INDOOR SOCCER CENTER

Completed last spring, LU’s Thomas Indoor Soccer Center is comprised of two turf fields surrounded by protective walls and netting. Part of Campus North’s LaHaye Student Union, the facility, donated by alumni Glen and Teresa Thomas also features a spectator section, sound system, multiple televisions and wireless capability. Throughout the year, the TISC will offer a variety of intramural sports as well as open recreational times. When not being used by LU students, the center will be open for adult and youth leagues in the community.

TENNIS COURTS

Six new NCAA-regulation tennis courts have been completed at Campus North. An additional six courts will be completed before the start of the 2010 tennis season. In addition to hosting men’s and women’s collegiate matches and championship tournaments, the complex will also be open for intramural use.

COMMUNICATIONS TOWER ON LIBERTY MOUNTAIN

Workers installed conduit for a new communications tower on Monogram Hill in July. Beaumont said the tower should be finished in the next three months. It will facilitate the conversion of LU’s WTLU-TV from analog to digital format and it could serve radio, television and even cell carriers.
LAHAYE RECREATION AND FITNESS CENTER

As physical fitness continues to be an important aspect of campus life, LU has met the increased demand by expanding its weight room and supplying additional squat racks, deadlift and bench press stations and free weights to the LaHaye Recreation and Fitness Center. The facility also upgraded its equipment in the cardio room and upstairs loft, replacing 15 treadmills, six elliptical machines and adding six new treadmills with built-in televisions. When walking into the Student Union lobby, students will notice a new aerobics room, complete with a rubberized floor, punching bags and free weights. The entire fitness center also features an indoor NCAA regulation-sized pool, two hot tubs, dual sound systems as well as a facility-wide PA system.

LAHAYE ICE CENTER

The second floor of the LaHaye Ice Center underwent renovations this summer to accommodate the continued growth of LU’s club sports. LU Radiance, the university’s synchronized skating team, now has a locker room to call its own. The new addition gives the team adequate space for storage and preparation before Ice Center performances. Members of LU’s 20 club teams now have a meeting place with the completion of the club sports conference center. Equipped with a motorized projection screen, this smart classroom is available seven days a week and can be used to host a variety of functions. Adjacent to the conference center, the club sports workout room gives team members a chance to enhance their cardio and better their game-day performance. Complete with a rubberized floor and plasma TVs, the workout room will be available from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. daily, with team workouts scheduled for 5-9 p.m.
LIBERTY MOUNTAIN

With over 65 miles of man-made and natural trails along Liberty Mountain, the university made even more improvements to its extensive trail system this summer. Crews carved out about five miles of new trails and touched up existing pathways. More than 100 emergency signs were also placed along the trail system to assist runners, hikers and bikers who may venture off course. In the case of an emergency, individuals needing directional or medical assistance can provide the Liberty University Police Department with their exact location thanks to a designated number found on each marker. “It’s something I’ve wanted to do for a while because our system is so vast and you can get turned around out there,” said Lee Beaumont, LU’s director of auxiliary services.

SCHOOL OF AERONAUTICS/SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING

Business executives, government officials and university administrators met in September to learn more about the building campaigns of two of Liberty University’s fastest growing academic programs. Gen. David Young, Dean of the School of Aeronautics (SOA), and Dr. Ron Sones, Dean of the School of Engineering and Computational Sciences (SECS), shared the vision and needs of each school. With enrollment in the SOA and the SECS continuing to rise, both schools are making plans for future growth and development, including new facilities and programs. Chancellor Jerry Falwell, Jr. discussed how enhancing these academic programs further the university’s goals to improve the overall educational experience offered at LU. “These schools are taking us beyond what a liberal arts college usually offers — to research and technical training that we’ve never had before, and we’re excited about it,” Falwell said. As the university continues to grow, the addition of research and technical degrees are rounding out the academic programs, truly making Liberty University the top evangelical university in the nation.
EQUESTRIAN OFFERINGS

In addition to the recent establishment of LU’s equestrian club team, students who enjoy horseback riding will soon have even more room to roam. Liberty is converting about 160 acres of its Jack Mountain property into equestrian pastures. The land will primarily be used for grazing, hay production and trail rides. While there are no plans as of now to turn the property into an equine facility, LU is currently utilizing Serene Creek Run Riding Center in Forest, Va., as the official home of the equestrian team.

TURNING LANE BY DOC’S DINER

In order to enhance safety for student pedestrians, LU has constructed a new turning lane at Doc’s Diner. After the turning lane is finished, the Virginia Department of Transportation will add a sidewalk and a fence onto the bridge crossing U.S. 460, as well as a sidewalk along the new turning lane going toward Campus East. VDOT is expected to finish its portion of the work later this year.

CAMPUS EAST

In June, Liberty purchased 19 residence halls, a clubhouse and gym on Campus East for $20.5 million. Liberty originally sold the 26-acre tract to Bostic Development in 2003, with a contract to build residence halls and lease the units to the university. The term of the lease was 40 years, but LU had the option to purchase the property after five. According to Chancellor Jerry Falwell, Jr., at the time Bostic was one of the largest developers of residential properties for colleges nationwide. The Campus East Phase 1 purchase will save the university more than $2.5 million per year in lease payments and taxes, Falwell said. Charles Spence, LU’s director of planning and construction, said owning the property made sense, with the tract surrounded by property already owned by Liberty. There are 30 buildings on Campus East; Liberty already owned 11,
built in 2005 and 2006. “We really needed that property to make our property continuous,” he said. In addition, workers are grading eight acres above the Liberty Godparent Home. LU has not yet determined how it will use the new site.

ENERGY SAVINGS

More energy-efficient lighting has been installed throughout Campus North, including the Tolsma Indoor Track, as well as at the Schilling Center on Main Campus. Many hallways are on energy management controls now, and occupancy sensors may eventually be installed in restrooms and classrooms. These measures are already cutting Liberty University’s electrical bill by thousands, said Maintenance Manager Scott Starnes.

IVY LAKE

Students visiting Liberty’s Ivy Lake just outside of Lynchburg can now have fun in the sun on the lake’s new 6,000-square foot beach. LU Auxiliary Services has also built a 40-foot dock addition and plans to build a shelter to store the boats piloted by the university’s men’s and women’s crew teams. Ivy Lake, located about 17 minutes from Liberty’s campus in Forest, Va., spans 112 acres. It is available for a variety of activities for Liberty University students, faculty and staff, including fishing, canoeing and picnicking. LU’s Biology department also uses the lake for research and other projects. Ivy Lake was donated by 1979 alumnus Tom DeWitt and two other local businessmen in 2008.