



Capital Planning & Budget

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Mr. Larry Earll, AIA, CSI, CCS, WCPM
Project Manager
Wisconsin Department of Administration
Division of State Facilities
P.O. Box 7866
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**Subject: Written Decision Regarding Findings of Fact
UW-La Crosse New Academic Building
State Project No. 05I30**

Dear Mr. Earll:

In compliance with the Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act, Wis. Stats. §1.11, the firm of Ayres Associates prepared an Environmental Impact Statement on behalf of the UW System for the UW-La Crosse New Academic Building (Project). This letter constitutes a legal finding of compliance with the WEPA process and provides notification that the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) is acceptable.

Findings of Fact

- 1) The purpose of the Project is to address critical issues of inadequate general assignment classrooms, along with severe space shortages for academic and student development departments as identified in the 2006 and previous editions of the UW-L Physical Development Plan. The new academic building will be constructed on the site of the existing Baird, Trowbridge, and Wilder Halls at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse campus. The Project involves demolishing these existing residence halls and administrative building and constructing a new, four-story, 179,600 gross square feet (gsf) academic building. The new academic building will be located at the academic core of the campus, where it will anchor the southwest corner of the future Central Campus Mall. Approximately sixty percent of the new building will be occupied by general assignment classroom space equipped with modern education technology and varying in size from 40 to 250 seats, and student study and collaboration areas configured in various formats. The remainder of the

building will house various academic and student advising departments that do not currently have enough space to meet their program needs. Departments to be housed in the New Academic Building include the College of Science and Health – Dean’s Office, Honors Program, Women’s Studies, Communications Studies, International Education (including ESL), Student Support Services, Career Services, Academic Advising Center, Counseling and Testing, Multicultural Student Services, and Campus Climate. The project budget is \$44.0 million, with construction scheduled to begin in July 2009 and be completed by July 2011. Construction will be funded through a combination of general fund supported borrowing and gift funds. Building Trust Funds and program revenue funds will be sought to fund demolition costs.

- 2) UW System Administration (UWSA) determined that the New Academic Building and site development is a Type I action and requires preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).
- 3) Under the direction of the UW System’s Environmental Affairs Officer, the following actions have been taken as set forth in Regent Resolution 2508, *Implementation of the Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act within the UW System* and by the *Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act*, Section 1.11, Wis. Stats.
 - a. On October 16, 2007, a scoping meeting was held to publicly communicate the project scope and determine the significant issues to be addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).
 - b. On December 14, 2007, a Class 1 public notice of availability of the DEIS, and notice of the public meeting was published in the La Crosse Tribune.
 - c. An announcement sheet was distributed as set forth in Regent Resolution 2508.
 - d. On December 14, 2007, the DEIS was released and distributed to appropriate parties. The DEIS was widely circulated to other federal, state, regional, and local agencies and interested private organizations and the public for their comments and suggestions. The DEIS document was also posted on the Consultant’s website for review and comment.
 - e. On January 30, 2008, a public meeting was held on the DEIS in the Port O’ Call Room, Cartwright Center, UW-La Crosse Campus. Eighteen people including representatives of the Project design team, University, and the public attended the meeting. Several verbal comments and one written comment were received at the meeting. Meeting minutes were distributed and also included in the FEIS.
 - f. On January 30, 2008, after a minimum 45-day public comment period, the public comment period on the DEIS was closed. One written comment on the DEIS was received. This comment and a follow-up response were included in the FEIS.
 - g. A Class 1 public notice was published on April 4, 2008, in the La Crosse Tribune announcing the availability of the FEIS and the public hearing.
 - h. On April 4, 2008, the Final Environmental Impact Statement was released. The FEIS was widely circulated to other federal, state, regional and local agencies and interested private organizations and the public for their comments and suggestions. The FEIS document was also posted on the Consultant’s website for review and comment.

- i. On May 5, 2008, a public hearing was held on the FEIS in the Valhalla B Room, Cartwright Center, UW-La Crosse campus. Fourteen people including representatives from the Project Architect, Division of State Facilities, UWSA, UW-La Crosse, and the public attended the meeting. Three individuals from the public commented at the hearing.
 - j. On May 5, 2008, after a minimum 30-day public comment period, the public comment period was closed. Three written email comments and one written letter comment were received during the comment period.
- 4) The University has reviewed and considered the draft EIS and the final EIS documents.

Summary of Impacts

As assessed and discussed in the FEIS, the project will have the following known or potential adverse environmental impacts and beneficial impacts:

Air, Noise, Energy

Other than short-term emissions from construction equipment, there will be no impact from vehicular emissions because of this project. The project is not expected to attract additional vehicles to the UW-La Crosse campus area. Fugitive dust resulting from earth moving and grading will be minimized with the application of dust control measures.

There will be short-term noise impacts during the 24-month construction and building demolition period; however, long-term noise impacts are not anticipated.

The building will be connected to the existing University steam, chilled water, and electric distribution systems and energy loads will not adversely impact the capacity of the existing systems. The new academic building is being designed to achieve LEED silver certification. As a result, the building design will meet, and might exceed, the Wisconsin Executive Order 145 requirement that new state buildings be designed to use 30% less energy than buildings designed to commercial code. For the most part, natural light and views have been provided for all classrooms, and it is anticipated that a majority of the regularly occupied office spaces will also include natural light and views.

Equipment and vehicles will consume energy during the construction phase of the project.

Geology/Soils

The Project will have no major effect on site geology and soils. The site is level and is currently developed with three buildings. Excavations will be required to remove existing building foundations and utilities.

Water Resources

The project will result in a net total impervious roof area increase by approximately 30,100 square feet (0.7 acres). Preliminary calculations indicate that the overall impervious area within the 4-acre project limits will increase from approximately 45% to 56% taking into account the building roof area and associated patios and walkways. This change will result in an increase in

storm water runoff volume. To counteract this increase, rain gardens are included at three locations within the project limits. A construction site erosion control plan including standard prevention practices (silt fences, bale dikes, seeding, or grading) to minimize any erosion due to storm water runoff during construction will be required.

Transportation

With the exception of possible service vehicle and ADA stalls, there is no intent to construct additional parking as part of this project. The site of the New Academic Building does not currently contain any parking, so there will be no net gain or loss in parking space and overall campus parking needs should not be affected. During new building construction, there will be interference to pedestrian traffic caused by construction vehicles. It is anticipated that perimeter walkways around the new building site will remain open during construction. Primary access to the site by construction vehicles will be from the southwest at Vine and 16th Street. Appropriate safety fencing and barricades will need to be provided to secure the construction site.

Because the New Academic Building will have a prominent location on campus, and because it will be used by a large number of students, faculty, and staff everyday, particular attention will be paid to circulation of pedestrians, bicycles, and service vehicles. Entry plazas will be located on the east and west sides of the building, and will be designed to direct pedestrian flow into the building from multiple directions. The entry plazas will also provide pedestrian connections to the existing walkway system that surrounds the site. Bicycle parking will be located adjacent to both entrances and will be consistent with the campus site design guidelines outlined in the campus master plan.

The New Academic Building is not anticipated to generate new commuter traffic to the campus because it is being constructed to accommodate current student needs, and not with the intent of growing the campus. However, some excess capacity is built into the project for modest growth. The primary impact to a potential short-term increase in commuter traffic is the relocation of residential hall space to an off campus location.

Biological /Chemical

There are no long-term biological impacts anticipated because of the project. The WDNR indicated that there are no sensitive natural resources or wetlands within project limits. There will be a short-term impact on flora and fauna in the area when construction begins, including the removal of up to 46 trees during the course of construction within the 4-acre project limits. Some trees might be transplanted, and others added to result in a net overall increase in trees in the project area.

There is no known hazardous waste contamination, or any underground storage tank issues on site. Abatement of asbestos containing materials in Baird, Trowbridge and Wilder Halls will be required prior to building demolition.

Historical/Economic/Social

Baird, Trowbridge, and Wilder Halls are not listed on the state or national register of historic places. Although these buildings will be demolished, some method to continue recognition and

historical significance of these building names will be developed. There are no known archaeological sites in the project area.

The Project will require an initial financial commitment of \$44,000,000 plus long-term annual operation and maintenance costs. The project will be funded by general fund supported borrowing and gift funds. Building trust funds and program revenue funds will be sought to fund demolition costs. During the construction phase, there will be a short-term increase in employment and a positive impact to the local community resulting from purchase of food, lodging, fuel, equipment, and supplies. In the long-term, there might be an increase in faculty and staff to support a proposed increase in student population. Assuming an economic multiplier in the range of 2.4 for university expenditures, the \$44,000,000 construction project can be expected to contribute up to \$105,000,000 to the local, regional, and national economy.

Beneficial impacts to the cultural environment within the boundaries of the project include new learning spaces and academic and student support services to benefit all UW-La Crosse students and faculty. In addition, members of the public will use the facility as they attend gatherings or non-degree educational sessions held in the building. The central campus mall design will provide a centralized outdoor space for students, staff, and faculty. Temporary displacement of academic departments currently located in Wilder Hall will occur for a two-year period between the demolition of Wilder Hall and completion of the New Academic Building. These departments will need to relocate to other spaces on campus during this time. The campus is currently developing a relocation plan.

Demolition of Baird and Trowbridge Halls will result in the temporary loss of 400 beds. The recent opening of the Reuter Hall residential building added a temporary surplus of 180 beds; however, all of this space is currently occupied. The campus is negotiating with private parties to develop short-term leases for residential housing located adjacent to the west and southwest boundaries of the campus. This would resolve the short-term loss of beds and provide student housing within walking distance of the campus. In the long-term, additional residence hall space will need to be constructed on campus to replace the loss of beds. Two potential areas for expanding, or constructing, new residence halls as identified in the 2005 campus master plan are on the west side of the campus near Coate Hall and Drake Hall.

Sustainability

The Project will be designed to achieve LEED silver certification. Relative to energy efficiency, the building will meet the requirement of Executive Order 145, which states that new State buildings are to be designed to use 30% less energy than commercial code. To achieve these goals, the Project will incorporate features such as envelope performance, cool day lighting, lighting efficiency (occupancy sensors, two level switching/adjustable lighting levels), unoccupied HVAC system shutdown, demand control ventilation, and exhaust/relief air energy recovery. Natural day lighting and views have been emphasized for the project. For the most part, natural light and views have been provided for all classrooms, and it is anticipated that a majority of the regularly occupied office spaces will also include natural light and views. Where possible, sunscreens and/or exterior shading will be included on the east and west exposures of the building to reduce potential glare and solar heat gains from direct sunlight. UW-La Crosse will pursue solar thermal domestic hot water, and Focus on Energy is reviewing the energy efficiency of this project. Current modeling indicates an energy savings of 35% as compared to the Executive Order 145 requirement of 30% less energy consumption than buildings designed to current commercial code requirements.

Cumulative Impacts

The new academic building project is part of a planned sequence of projects envisioned during the preparation of the 2005 campus master plan. Reuter Hall, a new 400-bed residence hall was recently constructed in anticipation of the loss of beds that will result from demolition of the Baird and Trowbridge residence halls. However, demolition of these residence halls and construction of the new academic building will result in a temporary loss of beds that will need to be replaced with a new residence hall to be located on the west side of the campus. The cumulative impact of these projects will be to provide a modern academic classroom facility in the academic core of the campus, frame the southwest corner of the central campus mall, and replace aging residence hall facilities.

Beneficial Impacts

The primary beneficial impact of the Project is that it will provide much-needed modern general assignment classrooms as well as space for student support services and academic departments, all in one building. This will facilitate student/faculty interaction and help support the basic academic mission of the university. The building is within the academic core of the campus and will help form the southwest border of the campus mall as envisioned in the 2005 campus master plan. The building design and materials will be consistent with campus architectural standards. Once complete, the project will be an asset that will help retain and attract students and faculty to the UW-La Crosse campus.

Replacing the existing Baird, Trowbridge, and Wilder Halls with a new building designed to achieve a LEED Silver certification will provide the benefits of sustainability, energy efficiency, and environmental responsibility. Features such as solar thermal domestic hot water, rain gardens, and potentially energy monitoring and verification devices will add to the progressive quality of this building. In addition, the landscaping plan will increase the number of trees on site compared to existing conditions.

The Project will provide a short-term economic benefit to the local community through employment opportunities and purchasing of materials, supplies, fuels, and retail services. Studies indicate that funds expended on this type of project can result in an economic benefit to the local, regional, and national economies in the range of 2.4 times the initial project cost. Thus, the \$44,000,000 construction project could be expected to contribute up to \$105,000,000 to the local, regional, and national economy.

Alternatives

The following alternatives to the project have been defined and deemed unacceptable:

The "No Action" Alternative

WEPA requires considering the alternative of taking no action. In this case, the "No Action" alternative is not an acceptable solution, as it does not address the lack of adequate general assignment classrooms and would have an adverse impact on the university's ability to fulfill its core mission. The quantity and quality of facilities within the university is critical not only to the delivery of instruction, but also to the recruitment and retention of quality students and faculty. Of the 90 general assignment classrooms currently on the UW-La Crosse campus, the UW-La Crosse 2006 Campus Physical Development Plan determined that thirty-eight of these rooms

are considered by UWSA to be substandard because of inadequate size, seating arrangements, and infrastructure.

Additions/Renovations to Existing Buildings

If a new academic building is not constructed on campus, extensive renovations will need to be completed to several existing buildings in an attempt to provide the quantity and quality of general assignment classroom space that is needed on the UW-La Crosse campus. This results in forcing the design and construction of these projects to be dictated by existing mechanical systems, structural bays, and site constraints. The design and construction of additions and renovations to existing buildings are often less cost effective than construction of a new building because of the possibility of multiple temporary relocations, designing and constructing around existing building and site constraints, discovery of unanticipated conditions during construction, and schedules driven by existing building occupancy and operational concerns rather than by construction critical paths. Also, the utility systems in these buildings are not adequately sized to serve extensive technology upgrades, so reconstruction of the utility services to the facilities would be required. It is estimated that the cost to provide new utilities to each of these buildings would be collectively greater than bringing new services to a single facility. For these reasons, this alternative was deemed unacceptable.

Conclusion

After review of the hearing record and the Final Environmental Impact Statement, the University of Wisconsin System confidently feels that this proposed action has fulfilled the spirit and intent of the Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act. The agency's decision is to proceed with the proposed project as planned.

Sincerely,

Terri J. Reda
UW System Environmental Affairs Officer

Cc: Joe Gow, Chancellor, UW-La Crosse
Matt Lewis, Campus Planning and Facilities Management, UW-La Crosse
Bill Colclough, Interim Provost, UW-La Crosse
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