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WKU College of Business unveils new facility

By DAVID MAMARIL HOROWITZ david.horowitz@bgdailynews.com

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Construction continues on Western Kentucky University's new Gordon Ford College of Business building on Tuesday, Nov. 12, 2024. The 113,000-square foot building, which features a three-story atrium, over 20 classrooms, adaptable learning spaces, a 300-seat auditorium, a coffee shop and more, is set to be completed in preparation for Fall 2025 classes. (Grace McDowell/grace.mcdowell@bgdailynews.com)
GRACE MCDOWELL

A Tuesday press tour of Western Kentucky University's under-construction Gordon Ford College of Business unveiled areas designated for some of the key features of the building – a spacious 113,000-square-foot facility that had its final beam set in April.

The three-story atrium will boast many features, including 21 classrooms, an auditorium, adaptable teaching and teaching spaces, a coffee shop and a student success center. It's slated to open on time for fall 2025, WKU President Timothy Caboni said.

Funding is mostly covered by \$74.4 million from the Kentucky General Assembly, while the remaining roughly \$25 million is coming from bonds, Caboni said.

The university's 2008-2024 Capital Plan cited a need for a new home for the College of Business, and the 2021-2031 Campus Master Plan "confirmed that Grise Hall had exceeded its useful life and identified a new location (the former site of Tate Page Hall) for a new business building," according to WKU.

In fall 2023, the Gordon Ford College of Business had 500 first-time first-year freshman, which was a record for the college, according to WKU.

The building will serve the fastest-growing college on campus, Caboni said, adding: "This building will help accelerate that growth ...

“One of the things we know is students are successful if they stay on campus,” Caboni said. “We want students to show up in the morning, spend all day here, take their meals here, spend time with their classmates, with their faculty, with their staff ... We don’t want to just build buildings – we want to create spaces for folks to gather.”



The student success center will span about half of the first floor, said Evelyn Thrasher, the dean of the Gordon Ford College of Business. It will have spaces for services and activities such as academic advising, peer tutoring, interviewing, and interactions with internship coordinators and professional development specialists, Thrasher said.

The building will also have a professional clothes closet that will provide a full professional suit free of charge every semester throughout College of Business students’ four years, Thrasher said.

The auditorium, on the first floor, will have a back entrance that allows people to enter the room in a less distracting manner during presentations, according to Kerra Ogden, the WKU capital project manager for the planning, design and construction of the project.

The coffee shop will probably be student-led, though WKU is still working on the details, Ogden said.

Ogden pointed out features such as a sales classroom with three breakout spaces that allow students to be in three different environments, including one that’s an interview setting and another that’s a setting where people can interact in standing-type sales position.

“We tried to give students a lot of different environments so that they can learn in a real life setting,” Ogden said.

David Horowitz