

College Shows Plans for \$40 Million Commons

Input: College Accepting Feedback on Floor Plan for 70,000-Square-Foot Facility

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The state's longest continually operating community college is rolling out plans for a new building.

The TransAlta Commons, a new 70,000-square-foot building on the corner of Washington Avenue and Pear Street on the Centralia College campus, will cost about \$40 million, according to Vice President of Finance and Administration Steve Ward.

Centralia College held a meeting Wednesday to take input from more than 50 attendees on the building's floor plan before moving forward with the design process.

"We're very, very close on this project," Ward said, noting the design process is expected to be underway in the next four months.

The college first forwarded a proposal for the new, multipurpose building to the governor in 2007. Last year, former Gov. Chris Gregoire's outgoing capital budget included \$37 million in state money for work on the TransAlta Commons for the college to receive over four years. Additionally, the college has raised \$3 million through capital campaigns.

Centralia College will replace many of the functions currently provided by the student center with the new facility.

One of the building's architects, Andy Rovelstad, of Rovelstad Architecture, led those in attendance through a computerized, three-dimensional tour of the new facility.

The increasing need for technology in education, he said, influenced the architecture of the state-of-the-art building.

The facility will feature a planetarium, a multi-purpose room, a bookstore, food services, a student-run cafe, offices for student government and programs, the multicultural center, a welcome desk, conference rooms, an area with a raised stage, projection capabilities, lounge space and seating areas on the first floor.

"If you can nourish community inside your building, that's my thing," Rovelstad said. "Our options are infinite."

The planetarium, Rovelstad said, will act as the focal point for the building and can double as lecture or art space.

"A planetarium has an amazing energy," he said.

The second floor will house student services, such as financial aid, counseling, admissions, and the cashier.

The building's third floor will include instructional spaces with moveable options designed for changing needs and technology over time. The third floor will also feature a communications center, office areas, lounge space, study nooks, hang out areas and an amphitheater.

The stairs will act as the statement piece for the building, Rovelstad said, featuring windows to look out over campus, similar to those in the Science Building.

Rovelstad said the architects are making revisions on the floor plan based on feedback from students, faculty, staff and the public.

"They're evolving," he said. "They're changing."

After completing the design, Ward said, he expects to open bidding for the building in early 2015 and to break ground that summer.

The Centralia College Commons, he said, could open as early as January 2017 or as late as the fall of that year.