

Centralia College Breaks Ground on TransAlta Student Commons

\$40 Million Project: Construction to Begin Almost Immediately



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Community leaders and supporters of the new TransAlta Student Commons building gathered at the corner of West Pearl Street and South Washington Avenue on the campus of Centralia College Wednesday to help celebrate a monumental time for the college.

About 12 different groups took turns breaking ground with golden shovels at the site of the new 70,000 square foot facility.

Robert Frost, Centralia College president, said that construction would begin almost immediately after the groundbreaking. The building is expected to open in 2017.

The building will feature a multi-purpose room, a planetarium, 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.

"I'm so excited to have the name 'commons' in the building," Frost said to the large crowd gathered. "That idea of public space, of shared space, of shared speech, of making room for everybody; that's what the college is all about and it's exciting just to come here and join and be a part of something already in progress like that."

The project could not have been made possible without the help of TransAlta, which since 2001 invested over \$1 million through its partnership with the college for program development, scholarships and the the new commons building.

Chris DuPont, TransAlta manager of operations and a member of the TransAlta Centralia Leadership Team, said the company was thrilled to contribute to the educational needs of the community and was pleased to be a part of the project.

State Rep. Richard DeBolt, R-Chehalis, said the building would further help the college transition community members to jobs, stating the most important need in the community is to break the cycle of poverty, something that can be accomplished through education.

“This isn’t just a college that has employees,” said DeBolt, who in addition to being a lawmaker works in communications for TransAlata. “This is a tool in our community toolbox to make our children and our citizens better and to give them an opportunity to grow.”

The new commons building is special because of the collaboration it took to become a reality, he said. Now, with construction soon beginning, the new building will be a place for students to learn, grow and unite.

Incoming chairwoman of the Centralia College Board of Trustees, Joanne Schwartz, said the groundbreaking was a “long awaited, highly anticipated, very exciting day.”

“The building of the TransAlta Student Commons will be the culmination of dedication and commitment, not to just a building on our beautiful campus, but to our students,” she said. “As all of us involved with this remarkable institution know, it is about providing our students every opportunity to be successful.”