

A vision for new connections

The benefits to students will make the new Martha Miller Center much more than the sum of its parts.

The building will house the departments of communication and modern and classical languages, and the offices of international education and multicultural life. The mix is viewed as highly complementary, and anticipation is high as faculty and staff of the programs envision ways that their proximity will lead to interaction and collaboration.

The results will include an overall focus on global awareness and cultural understanding that will enhance Hope's work in preparing students for life after graduation.

"Today's college students will live and work in a world that is, at the same time, both smaller and larger than the world most of us have known," said Dr. Nancy Sonneveldt '62 Miller, who is dean for the social sciences and chair of the Martha Miller Center Planning Team. "Smaller because of the ease with which we communicate across great distances. Larger because as borders fade, even dissolve, we will come into contact with more cultures, languages and ethnicities than in the past."

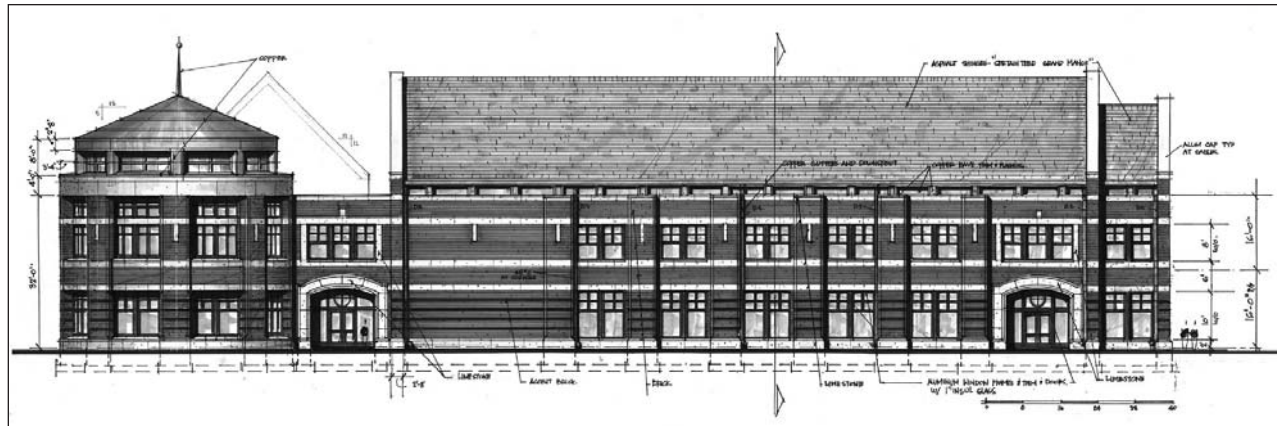
"The ability to communicate across language and culture will be required of anyone going into business, government, education, ministry, social work, medicine and virtually every other discipline," Dr. Miller said. "We believe that students who enter the building we envision will acquire a broadened awareness and heightened sensitivity to diversity in many forms due to the particular courses they take and the environment they experience."

The sentiment is echoed by Glinda Rawls, director of multicultural life, who values the increased connection of her office to the academic program.

"It says something about the direction in which the college is trying to go and move forward with the area of diversity and multiculturalism, and marrying those issues with the academic sector," she said. "Certainly students are going to benefit from the collaboration and interaction of all our offices."

The building also presents a leadership opportunity for Hope, according to Dr. Lee Forester, associate professor of German. "I really haven't seen this configuration anywhere else," he said. "And I think Hope has a great chance here to do an excellent building, excellent curricular move or statement by putting this together."

"It speaks to our interdisciplinarity," Dr. Forester said. "We're interested in making connections across different



The new Martha Miller Center will foster new connections between the department of communication and the department of modern and classical languages and communication, and the offices of international education and multicultural life—presenting opportunities that should serve students well. The architect's rendering above shows the Columbia Avenue building as it will look from Phelps Hall.

disciplines—that's what liberal arts is about. I think it's a logical outgrowth of our philosophy."

The building was announced in the summer of 1999, following a \$3 million leadership gift from the family of the late Martha Muller '24 Miller through her estate.

Initial planning included the burgeoning department of dance, but it became clear that it made sense to keep the performance discipline in the activity-oriented Dow Center with expanded facilities. The college built a new dance studio this summer when the weight room moved elsewhere in the building, and more space will open when offices now in the Dow move to the DeVos Fieldhouse when it is completed.

The college delayed developing a detailed outline for the Martha Miller Center until the right site could be identified. A natural choice emerged when the Holland Public Schools closed Lincoln Elementary School on Columbia Avenue at 11th Street. Hope purchased the property in 2002. Construction is waiting, though, until the college raises another \$6 million to fund for the \$10 million project.

The support is eagerly awaited. The collective virtue in the design follows individual necessity. All four programs need homes that match both the way they have grown and contemporary instructional standards.

For example, the number of students majoring in communication has nearly doubled in the past three years, from 65 to about 120, reflecting a broader trend. "Departments of communication all around the Midwest are seeing increases in enrollment," said Dr. James Herrick, who is the Guy VanderJagt Professor of Communication and chair of the department.

Correspondingly, the department has many space needs. In helping to meet them, the new building, Dr. Herrick noted, will support the program's breadth, balance and emphasis on collaborative research with students.

The department of modern and classical languages is one of the college's largest, with 19 full-time faculty teaching 700 to 750 students each semester. Some 80 percent of Hope's students study language in their first or second year.

The department is currently spread across three floors in Graves Hall, built in the 1890s as a chapel and library. The new building will bring the department together, and will include a modern language laboratory and classrooms wired for the Internet and other digital resources.

International education is currently in the Paul G. Fried International Center, a house in the central campus. Director Dr. Neal Sobania '68 noted that while the location does offer advantages, especially in providing a home-like atmosphere for international students, its isolation is a weakness. He feels increased connectedness will benefit international students and U.S. students alike.

The office will be more prominent in its new location,

which will help enhance student awareness of the benefits of study abroad. Plans are afoot to feature international and ethnic art in the building, which Dr. Sobania hopes will also help educate and interest students who visit the building.

"For me the issue has been, 'What do we as an international education office do next to promote global competency?,' which is kind of the way I think about international education," he said.

At the same time, the office will be its own suite within the center, which Dr. Sobania noted should help preserve the cherished home-like feel. Shared lounge space should also make the building a popular mixing site, particularly with neighboring multicultural life.

"We're interested in making connections across different disciplines — that's what liberal arts is all about."

**— Dr. Lee Forester
Associate Professor of German**

The Fried International Center was dedicated in September of 1990 in honor of Dr. Paul G. Fried '46, who is widely recognized for his role in developing international education at Hope. It's an office identity that Dr. Sobania noted will be retained within the Martha Miller Center. In fact, he sees the new building's overall emphasis as a further affirmation of Dr. Fried's work.

"We still have Paul Fried to thank for his vision for pushing for the founding of an international education office and program," he said. "The Fried Center for International Education will be one component within the Martha Miller Center, and I continue to think that's very, very important."

Multicultural life will follow a model similar to that of international education within the new building. Currently housed in three places in two buildings, the office will also have its own suite within the new center.

Having its staff and activity space together will definitely help the office in its work, but, like Dr. Sobania, Rawls especially values the opportunities for interaction that sharing space with other programs will promote.

"We've talked about creating in the building these 'third spaces' where students can interact and exchange," she said.

"We will have the flow and traffic of students who want to interact and connect and socialize," Rawls said. "I think those are important aspects of learning." ✍

LEGACIES

A VISION  OF HOPE

Legacies: A Vision of Hope, launched in October of 2000, aims to raise \$105 million by December. The four primary initiatives are: renovating and expanding the Peale Science Center; constructing the DeVos Fieldhouse; increasing the endowment; and general campus improvements, including the construction of the Martha Miller Center for communication, modern and classical languages, international education and multicultural life. Thus far, the campaign has raised more than \$98 million.

For more information about the campaign, please visit the college online at www.hope.edu or call (616) 395-7393. To make a pledge to the campaign, please call (616) 395-7775.