

A tale of two buildings

At the beginning of the 1970s, the college was at a crossroads.

The program in the sciences was highly regarded, but had greatly outgrown its space in Lubbers Hall. The building, designed three decades earlier, didn't meet modern needs. With the college having grown dramatically in the years since, it wouldn't even have been adequate for the demands placed on it had technology and Hope's way of teaching remained constant.

Something had to be done, something major, or Hope's quality would suffer. That something was this: the Peale Science Center opened in 1973, succeeding Lubbers Hall, completed in 1942.

Three more decades have passed. As Lubbers was then, Peale is now. And Hope, again, is at a crossroads. The student body has grown by nearly 50 percent, scientific knowledge and pedagogy have changed multifold, and something needs to be done.

"The advancement of science in the new directions that it has gone has increased so dramatically over the last 25 years, and the way in which we teach science has changed so dynamically over that same period of time, that our science building is unfortunately inadequate in size to house the number of faculty and number of students we serve," said Dr. James Gentile, who is dean for the natural sciences and the Kenneth G. Herrick Professor of Biology at Hope.

By any number of measures, Hope is at or near the top nationally in science among the country's 1,100-1,200 liberal arts institutions. In 1998, for example, Hope was one of only 10 liberal arts institutions nationwide to be recognized for innovation and excellence in science instruction by the National Science Foundation (NSF)



The renovated and expanded science center will update a facility that has served well but is in need of a major update. This view looks southeast across Van Andel Plaza from Graves Place (11th Street) near Central Avenue Christian Reformed Church.



A spacious multi-story atrium will offer tables for studying or gathering.

with an "Award for Integration of Research and Education." Hope held more NSF "Research Experiences for Undergraduates" grants (five) this summer than any other liberal arts college in the country. A report from the NSF placed Hope in the top 25 nationally among baccalaureate colleges as a source of future Ph.D. recipients in the natural, physical and social sciences, and engineering—including third nationally in chemistry.

Dr. Gentile, noted, however, that the programs are at risk, all the more since other schools haven't been idle in the years since Peale was built.

"There's been a tremendous investment nationally in science buildings, and those institutions are gaining ground on us rapidly because they have the infrastructure to build upon," Dr. Gentile said.

In the near future, independent of any expansion, Peale will require major work to its air exchange, plumbing and electrical systems. Hope hopes to complete the renovation and expansion simultaneously, however, since it would be more economical to pursue the projects as a package.

The design will complement the college's on-going emphasis on collaborative student-faculty research as a teaching model, with the addition of interdisciplinary classroom space reflecting the way that the boundaries between disciplines continue to blur.

"Our facilities now limit our ability to expand, or even maintain, programs of innovative science instruction and research methods."

— President James E. Bultman '63

The \$36 million science center project will double the current building, expanded to the west to include new classrooms, laboratories, and office and storage space.

The expanded building will continue to house the departments of biology, chemistry, biochemistry, the geological and environmental sciences, and psychology, with the department of nursing moving in from its cottage headquarters on 14th Street. The design will complement the college's on-going emphasis on collaborative student-faculty research as a teaching model, with the addition of interdisciplinary classroom space reflecting the way that the boundaries between disciplines continue to blur.

The \$36 million price tag may sound steep to a personal-income sensibility, but Dr. Gentile notes that the result will be "nowhere, nowhere near extravagant."

What the building does include, he notes, is a 10 percent buffer for growth—not in anticipation of an additional 300 students at Hope, but with the expectation that the coming decades will also see major changes in science and teaching.

"If enrollment remains constant, that will extend the lifetime of this building significantly," he said. "I would hope this lasts us a good 30 to 40 years." ✍