New student rec facility highlights $13 million in capital projects

The SVSU Board of Control approved a series of capital projects during its May 8 meeting.

A student recreation facility is being built in response to a surge in student demand for athletic and fitness offerings. Expected to cost $5 million to $6 million to construct at a size of approximately 30,000 square feet, current designs for the facility call for it to house up to four indoor courts for basketball, volleyball, indoor soccer and other activities, as well as an elevated walking track. It will be built off of the existing Fitness Center to the south and is scheduled to open by summer 2011.

Cardinal Fitness programs have seen participation explode from 111 participants during the 2007-08 academic year to 902 fitness seekers in 2009-10. Over the same time period, participation in intramural sports has grown by 58 percent.

Presently, these programs are conducted in the Ryder Center, which also serves as home to SVSU’s varsity athletic teams and student-run club sports programs, as well as a number of public events throughout the year.

“We want our students to have access to programs and facilities that allow the opportunity for a well-rounded student life, including fitness activities, and Ryder Center simply can no longer accommodate our students’ growing demand for campus recreation offerings, both organized and informal,” said Merry Jo Brandimore, dean of student affairs.

A renovation of the Student Center is also planned, starting this fall. The existing bookstore will be remodeled into student programming and meeting space. Since the Student Center opened in 2003, the number of registered student organizations on campus has increased from 95 to 120, and the annual number of student events has risen from 512 to 1,121. Also, the Real Food on Campus (RFoC) cafeteria will be converted to a Fresh Food on Campus format where all food preparation takes place in the open. Both projects are scheduled to be completed by fall 2011.

The bookstore will be relocated to the first floor of Curtiss Hall, to give it a more prominent location for visitors to campus.

“We feel that is the best location for the bookstore, because it serves as a prime entry point to campus,” said James Muladore, executive vice president of administration and business affairs.

Summer renovations result in temporary, permanent relocations

With renovation projects underway in Curtiss and Wickes halls and the new Health & Human Services building nearing completion, a number of faculty and staff will be enjoying temporary quarters for part of the summer.

“These temporary stays will be intentionally short,” said James Muladore, executive vice president of administration and business affairs.

Temporary signs are posted around campus to direct people to the appropriate location. Affected faculty and staff retain their phone extensions and e-mail addresses for contact purposes.

All faculty and staff in the Crystal M. Lange College of Health & Human Services are expected to move into their new facility by early August.

Other departments that are relocating permanently by this fall include:

• Career Services (to Wickes Hall, second floor)
• International Programs and English Language Program (to Wickes Hall, second floor)
• Geography Department (to Wickes Hall, second floor)
• Graduate Admissions (to Wickes Hall, first floor)
• Math Resource Center (to Brown Hall, second floor)
• Minority Student Services (to Curtiss Hall, first floor)

Plans also call for expansion of the banquet rooms on the second floor, which host a variety of university and public events throughout the year. The Curtiss Hall renovations will begin this fall and should be completed by spring 2011.

In all, the capital projects will total up to $13.5 million, and will be financed through a combination of university reserves for capital projects and funding from SVSU’s Auxiliary Systems, which includes self-supporting operations such as campus dining and the bookstore.

Wickes Hall to close for two weekends in June

Construction is underway to improve the heating, cooling and ventilation systems on Wickes Hall that date to the building’s opening in 1969. This process involves placing steel beams and a new air handling unit on the roof of the facility.

As a result, plans are to completely close Wickes Hall Saturday, June 5 and Sunday, June 6; faculty and staff will not be permitted to enter the building or their offices on those days. In addition, the Wickes Circle parking lot will be closed to vehicle traffic on Friday, June 4, as that area will be needed to prepare for the weekend work.

This process will be repeated on a subsequent weekend in June, most likely June 11-13 or June 18-20. Both anticipated weekend projects are subject to weather conditions.
Picture a theatre major. Chances are you envision someone who enjoys the spotlight, loves to perform and “ham it up,” even if he isn’t on stage. Dave Rzeszutek doesn’t fit that mold.

“I’m kind of a quiet guy, kind of an introvert,” he said.

Those tendencies need not be limitations. “Because it is the theatre, I have to be outgoing. It’s something I’ve worked on over the years.”

That dedication to his craft is something Rzeszutek hopes to instill in his students, who made quite an impression – even before he was hired.

“In my interview,” he recalled, “I had a bunch of students and they basically grilled me to see if I was the right fit for them. I thought opening it up to the opinions of students was a good part of the interview process. It made my choice easier.”

Last summer, Rzeszutek relocated from his hometown of Buffalo, N.Y., which he says shares many similarities with Saginaw as industrial cities that “get a bad rap.” In less than a year, he has quickly grown to appreciate SVSU’s cooperative culture and supportive spirit, seen in students, colleagues and – somewhat surprising to him – administrators.

“They know students’ names,” he said. “That impresses me.”

Rzeszutek’s video for academic advising (along with Ric Roberts and select students) is making an impression at freshmen orientations. He has a busy summer ahead, too, directing The Colorado Catechism, which will be shown June 1-4 in the Black Box Theatre. And in August, he and Janet Rubin will present at the National Conference of the American Alliance for Theatre and Education.

The discipline can be applied to many educational pursuits, Rzeszutek said.

“ Theatre can be used for your everyday life, not just the stage. The skills that we’re teaching are great for anyone in a medical profession, to help improve their bedside manner; people going into business or law can learn how to stand in front of people and have a better public display of themselves.”

The rise in technology could be seen as a threat to live performance, but not to Rzeszutek.

“I see a lot of opportunity, because as we’re more technologically-equipped, I think a lot of people will be losing personal skills. Some people are hiring actors to learn how to communicate face to face.”

Any reports of theatre’s demise Rzeszutek will find to be greatly exaggerated.

“Theatre has been around for thousands of years. There’s a reason why art exists: we need it. It makes us human.”
Imagine you are a college student preparing to leave home for the first time to study in a country far from home where the language and culture are foreign. How valuable would it be to find a friendly voice and helpful person anticipating your needs? Debbie Martin has been filling that role since 1999.

“Before they arrive, I organize their housing and make sure someone is at the airport to pick them up when they get here.”

International Programs staff used to make the pick ups personally before the sheer volume rendered that impossible. Still, the personal bonds become very strong very quickly.

“Students come and they become part of your family, and you become part of theirs. It’s like having a child in some ways,” said Martin, mother of two. “I hope my children study abroad, and if they do, I hope there is someone there making sure they’re well taken care of.”

Martin says for most international students the cultural adjustment is “huge,” especially when it comes to their appetite.

“Anyone who’s traveled outside the U.S. knows your biggest adjustment, even if it’s just for a week, is what you’re going to eat.”

Martin’s contributions include helping students show off.

“My proudest accomplishment here is starting Intercultural Night. I don’t know if I’ll ever outdo it.”

Martin recalled that nine years ago, three students approached her, eager to perform and share their native culture with the campus community.

“That first year, it was such craziness ... I knew what they wanted to do would take a lot. We just made it happen. We had a tape recorder in the back of the Rhea Miller Recital Hall.”

The event has now evolved into a much-anticipated multimedia production.

“It really kind of grew on its own,” she said. “It just gets better every year.”

Aside from International Programs, Martin has been a proud member of the SVSU choir for 12 years.

“Music has been my passion since I was young,” she explained. Martin also spends much of her time following her children. Daughter Madison recently performed in “Grease,” and son Bryce is advancing in the martial arts.

“It takes a lot of work being a volunteer mom,” she quipped. Her job takes a lot of work, too, and Martin wouldn’t have it any other way.

“I love the students; I love the variety. It’s never the same thing.” And she hopes never to end the international encounters. “It makes your life a little more full.”
Emond named interim Dean of Education

A veteran scholar and educator has been named interim dean of the College of Education. Susie Emond has accepted an appointment to lead the college, stepping in for Steve Barbus, who is retiring. Carolyn Wierda has agreed to serve as interim associate dean.

A professor of teacher education, Emond joined the SVSU faculty in 1978. She has coordinated several U.S. Department of Education grants for SVSU programs that have prepared teachers for the ever-changing classroom. In 2002 Emond was named SVSU’s Rush Lecturer and received the House Family Award for Teacher Impact. She completed her doctorate at the University of Florida.

Wierda joined SVSU in 2009 as executive-in-residence for the College of Education. Before that, she enjoyed a long and distinguished career in K-12 education, including six years as the superintendent of Bay City Public Schools.

Professional Profile
• Basil Clark, professor of English, was among 27 faculty and 15 undergraduate students who participated in one or more academic sections at the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts & Letters annual conference, March 26 in Grand Rapids. Nearly 400 participants presented in the 28 academic sections covering a range of topics. Next year’s conference will take place March 11 at SVSU. The call for papers will go out in September; Clark, who serves as campus rep for the Michigan Academy, encourages faculty, graduate students and advanced undergraduates to submit papers.

New Cardinals
• Gillian Markey, lecturer of English, welcomed a daughter, Marabelle Grace, May 6.

Condolences
• To Laura Peil, director of the Regional Education Resource Center, on the loss of her father, Hugo Jankens, who died April 25.

Briefly Speaking
• Cynthia Woiderski, director of disability services, was elected to a two-year term as the four-year institutional representative on the executive board for the Michigan Association on Higher Education and Disability, May 13 in Lansing.

Grants Announced
• Tamara Barrientos, mathematics coordinator/budget officer, received $197,295 from the Michigan Department of Education for her project, “Algebraic Thinking Across Grades 3-8.” Teachers receiving this professional development will be able to better prepare their students for advanced math.

• Brooks Byam, professor of mechanical engineering, received $32,700 in contracts this academic year for 8 mechanical engineering industry-sponsored capstone design projects. SVSU students, as well as local businesses, benefit greatly from these projects.

• M. Patricia Cavanaugh, professor of English, received $194,352 from the Michigan Department of Education for Writing Strategies for Middle and High School Teachers. The program will help middle and high school teachers create an awareness of writing expectations for their students.

• David Karpovich, professor of chemistry, received $308,954 from the National Science Foundation for the acquisition of Raman and Thermal Analysis Instrumentation for the study of materials.

• Jeffrey Koperski, professor of philosophy, received a $3,000 honorarium plus expenses from the John Templeton Foundation for the China/U.S. Visiting Professor Program to teach a course on the relation between science and religion this May at Wuhan University.

• Gary Lange, professor of biology, received $4,700 from the Michigan Space Grant Consortium – Pre-College Education Program for his project, “Science for First Generation in College.” This program will support and encourage first generation college students to be successful in their studies.

• Tai Chi Lee, professor of computer science & information systems, received $2,500 from the Michigan Space Grant Consortium – Undergraduate and Graduate Fellowship Program on behalf of student Jeffrey Conner for his research: Field Programmable Gate Arrays. This grant helps fulfill an SVSU goal to provide undergraduate research opportunities for students.

• Morteza Marzjarani, professor of computer science & information systems, received $2,500 from the Michigan Space Grant Consortium – Undergraduate and Graduate Fellowship Program on behalf of student Christina Dugan for her research: Planet Jupiter.

• David McCloy, assistant director of the Math Science Center, received $195,831 from the Michigan Department of Education for his project, “Middle and High School Partnership for Earth Science.” This professional development program for teachers concentrates on earth science and the new requirements for high school graduation.

• Steven Sepanski, professor of mathematics, received $2,500 from the Michigan Space Grant Consortium – Undergraduate and Graduate Fellowship Program on behalf of student David Bell for his research: Differential Equations.

• Matthew Vannette, assistant professor of physics, received $5,000 from the Michigan Space Grant Consortium – Research Seed Grant for his research, “Growth and Characterization of Single Crystal Intermetallic Compounds.”

The Interior is published on the last Tuesday of each month for faculty and staff at SVSU. University departments sponsoring activities or events listed in the Interior will provide reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities when contacted at least three days in advance.

Submission Deadline:
Noon on Wednesday before the publication date. Please send items by e-mail to: tmi@svsu.edu.