

BELOIT COLLEGE DOWNTOWN PROJECT NEARS COMPLETION

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Ryan Silvola/Beloit Daily News All that remains in terms of the exterior work on Beloit College's CELEB building is to install an iron canopy to connect the two structures. The college is set to have a grand re-opening event to celebrate all of the interior and exterior work done this spring.

BELOIT - Beloit College's entrepreneurial center is set to have a grand re-opening event this spring as crews are putting the finishing touches on the building's interior and exterior over the next few weeks.

The Center for Entrepreneurship in Liberal Education at Beloit (CELEB) spans the Houston and Hulburt buildings on East Grand Avenue in downtown Beloit. Brian Morello, CELEB director, said there's no official date for the grand opening yet, but the college already has held a few soft openings to prepare for the larger event later this year.

Most of the building is finished and operational, Morello said.

Two projects still are in the works. One is installing the iron canopy. It will run across both of the buildings bearing the entire CELEB name.

Most of the building's furniture also needs to be installed. The furniture is being delivered on Feb. 22.

"We've tried to keep the features of the buildings while combining them into one center," Morello said.

Construction began at the end of August. Morello said the renovations are part of the college's master plan that was conceived when the college purchased the building in 2003. Back then, Morello said the college only had funding for basic renovations, and the second phase of renovations was pushed back until 2017.

Exterior renovations include upgrading facade work and windows on both of the buildings and removing one of the entrances. The Houston building on the west side now has a facade that looks like brick, while the Hulburt building's limestone has been cleaned. In order to make the building more accessible, the entrance has been lowered to ground level, and an elevator has been installed.

Morello said the third floor also has been remodeled to provide usable workspace. Originally, the third floor had two apartments that were unusable when the college bought the building. This remodel will add 30 percent more space to the overall center.

The third floor will feature shared workspaces with large monitors that can adapt to the user's needs and a business pitch lab.

There also will be a lab with advanced technology for rapid prototyping as well as 3D imaging and printing that will allow for free-form experiments.

"The idea is to get the technology in here so people can work with the physical objects," Morello said.

He said though students have already been working with this technology, having this dedicated space will allow for a more collaborative environment. It also means there will be room for more student lab technicians.

"This will help amplify the work our students are doing," Morello said.

The college declined to release the cost of the renovations and said the funds came from private donors.

Numerous entrepreneurial ventures are offered at CELEB, including: Gallery ABBA, an art gallery run entirely by students; a fully functioning audio recording studio; a cable access television station, BATV; a lab for post-production of video, film and sound editing projects and more.