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RWU Celebrates Groundbreaking for School of Engineering, Computing and Construction Management Labs Building

New building named for outgoing RWU Board of Trustees Chairman Richard L. Bready

The Roger Williams University community joins partners from the construction, design, and builders team in a ceremonial groundbreaking of the new SECCM Labs.

October 25, 2018  |  By Edward Fitzpatrick

BRISTOL, R.I. – Against the backdrop of bulldozers poised in the midst of constructing the building, Roger Williams University held a groundbreaking ceremony on Thursday, Oct. 25, for the new hub of hands-on learning for the School of Engineering, Computing and Construction Management (SECCM).

SECCM Labs will feature laboratories, project rooms and open spaces dedicated to collaborative, experiential education. The new building will represent a crucial addition to SECCM, which is experiencing significant growth while facing mounting competition. Plans call for a three-story, 27,325-square-foot building that will be a state-of-the-art facility equipped to provide the highest quality educational experience for RWU students.

At the ceremony, the University announced it is naming the SECCM Labs building for Richard L. Bready, the former Nortek Inc. CEO and Chairman who is concluding 11 years as chair of the RWU Board of Trustees.

“The SECCM Labs are an important physical manifestation of the commitment to experiential education that lies at the heart of RWU’s approach to higher education,” RWU Interim President Andy Workman said. “SECCM students will have 27,000 square feet of space for hands-on work that will deepen their classroom learning and prepare them for fulfilling careers after graduation. The SECCM programs have been growing robustly for many years, and we are pleased that this building will encourage more students to enroll. It provides facilities equal to the quality of the programs offered at SECCM.”

The building will, for example, include a two-story Construction Management High Bay, with an overhead crane; a Fluid Mechanics Laboratory; and a Building Information Modeling/Virtual Reality Laboratory, where two-dimensional design will meet the three-dimensional “real world.” The building was designed by Brewster Thornton Group Architects.
“This is the culmination of three years of hard work on behalf of many people at the University, including the senior leadership and the Board of Trustees, and it’s incredibly exciting,” SECCM Dean Bob Potter said. “There’s no question that right now people in the disciplines we serve – engineering, computing and construction management firms – look at RWU as a source of quality young graduates. This project will help us grow, and we hope that someday RWU will be the leading source of engineering, computing and construction management graduates in the State of Rhode Island.”

A View Inside SECCM Labs

Renderings of laboratories, project rooms and common spaces inside the new SECCM Labs building. These images reflect how rooms might appear and are not intended to be exact replicas.

Exterior view of SECCM Labs, looking from the heart of campus.

Shawmut Design & Construction is the construction management firm leading the SECCM Labs project. In addition to their extensive experience in academic construction, Shawmut is one of the top employers of RWU graduates and they are collaborating with SECCM faculty to incorporate all aspects of the project into our SECCM courses throughout the construction process. In essence, SECCM Labs will be a “living laboratory,” with Shawmut providing behind-the-scenes access and real-time construction lessons for students.

Thanks to the “living laboratory” environment, faculty have myriad opportunities to integrate hands-on learning experiences around SECCM Labs into the curriculum. For example, students are observing the project’s weekly construction meetings, touring the work site and learning directly from contractors, and interning with the project partner, Shawmut, on real-world project duties such as assisting with materials testing and quality control testing, preparing submittals and meeting minutes.

As a student benefiting from that experiential learning opportunity, Raquel Santos said she was excited to get this firsthand education lesson and looks forward to learning in the new state-of-the-art facility.
“I chose Roger Williams because I knew this university would provide me with opportunities to work closely with professors and classmates. The SECCM engineering program is a close-knit community that has guided and challenged me to explore new opportunities,” said Santos, a sophomore engineering major. “I’m looking forward to taking my upper-level classes in SECCM Labs. I know the new space and technology will only enhance the education myself and my classmates will enjoy.”

Testifying to the excellence of SECCM programs, Heather Boujoulian, Senior Vice President and Director of Development in Investment Management at Berkshire Group and Class of 1997 construction management graduate, credits her successful career to the high quality of education she received.

“The excellent faculty and the strong academic program really helped me develop the skills I use every day in what can be a really fast-paced and demanding but rewarding industry,” Boujoulian said. “The students are going to benefit tremendously from this. The cutting-edge technologies are going to prepare them for what they’ll experience in real-world jobs, and it’s going to play an important role in recruiting new students.”

A fundraising campaign for the $13.8 million project has raised $4 million toward a goal of $5.8 million. The SECCM Labs Campaign Committee is being chaired by Trustee Todd Rechler ’93, Trustee Joseph Brito Jr. P’11 and Interim President Workman.

“The SECCM labs project will be instrumental for the continued growth of the engineering, computing and construction management programs,” RWU Interim Chief Operating Officer Jerry Williams said. “We greatly appreciate the leadership and support Trustee Rechler and Trustee Brito have provided on the SECCM Labs Campaign Committee, as well as the support that Chairman Bready has provided for this project. This is another example of the dedication by our Trustees to continue to move the University forward.”