

Bioengineering Building at MSU, renovation of science building at LCC signs of progress

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This is a rendering of the Bioengineering Building, being built on Michigan State University's campus. The \$61 million four-story, 130,000-square-foot laboratory building should be completed in two years. / Courtesy photo

Written by **Matthew Miller**

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There is a hole in the ground just south of Service Road on Michigan State University's campus, a spot between the Life Science building and the Clinical Center and the new Bott Building for Nursing Education and Research.

Two years from now it will be the site of a \$61 million four-story, 130,000-square-foot laboratory building, the largest dedicated research facility built on the campus in more than a decade, a collaborative space for engineers, medical researchers and researchers working on basic science.

The amount of external research funding coming into MSU has been on a generally upward trajectory for more than a decade. The progress on what will be the Bioengineering Building is a sign of the university's ambitions to continue it.

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research and teaching in mid-Michigan. MSU has built a new building for plant science and another for nursing in recent years. Lansing Community College just put the finishing touches on state-of-the-art teaching laboratories.

Around the time of the groundbreaking on the Bioengineering Building in June, vice president for research and graduate studies Stephen Hsu said the building would "help us attract more competitive, nationally funded projects and recruit the best minds to work with us."

Leo Kempel, the acting dean of the College of Engineering, said the location is "right in a nice sweet spot for engineering faculty to form collaboratives with colleagues outside of the college, and that's where we're going to find that next big growth area, not just for the college but for the campus."

Not that the College of Engineering hasn't already seen growth. It brought in nearly \$35 million in research and grant funding in the

2012 fiscal year, which is roughly twice what it brought in a decade before. MSU's College of Human Medicine saw a similar increase, driven by the expansion of research operations in Grand Rapids and the strategic hires of established researchers.



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“There is no single thing that leads to an increase like that,” Kempel said. It was the College of Engineering’s success in securing federally funded research centers such as the Center for Revolutionary Materials for Solid State Energy Conversion and the BEACON Center for the Study of Evolution in Action. It was ratcheting up the expectations on faculty to bring in research funding and take on more graduate students. It was a few senior researchers hitting big.

All of which is good beyond MSU, Kempel added. More research, more external funding and more students translates to a greater contribution to the state’s economy.

Five miles away, a newly renovated building is changing the way science is taught on the downtown campus of Lansing Community College.

“We were teaching cutting-edge technology and the leading information in the science but in a facility that dated back to man’s landing on the moon,” said Michael Nealon, dean of the college’s Arts and Sciences Division. He was talking about the Arts & Sciences building.

One of the goals of the \$30 million inside-and-out renovation that wrapped up this summer was to replace the aging and sometimes cramped science laboratories with facilities that were “comparable with any college or university in the nation for freshman and sophomore instruction,” as LCC President Brent Knight put it.

Science classes are among the most popular at LCC. Last year, the college taught more credit hours in biology than in any other subject save remedial math.

And the open and well-appointed laboratories, Nealon said, “create that kind of dynamic, immersive, inquiry-based learning that really catapults science to a new place.”

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