

2,650 brick mural draws interest to Bruner renovation

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Photo by Josh Moody

Designed by Jay Tschetter and Tom Meyers, "On the Shoulders of Giants" has been installed on the west exterior wall of Bruner Hall. The 31-foot by 14-foot brick mural features all of the sciences taught in Bruner Hall.

The University of Nebraska at Kearney has brought its science department into the 21st century this fall with the near completion of Bruner Hall. The center piece of the new addition, a state-of-the-art 24-by-30-foot dome planetarium and a 31-by-14-foot brick mural will be completed at a later date.

Even though the planetarium and mural have not been completed early with the rest of the facility, the overall renovation and the construction of the new addition are ahead of schedule by several months.

According to Robert Rycek, dean of the College of Natural and Social Sciences and chair of the art selection committee at UNK, the original completion dates for the renovation and new addition were December 2009 and February 2010 for the planetarium, now scheduled to be completed by Nov. 4.

According to Jay Tschetter from Images in Brick in Denton, Neb., one of the designers behind the creation of the 2,650 piece brick mural on the west wall of Bruner Hall, the sculpture will be completed within the following weeks.

"We are on pace to get it done in the next two weeks, but it all depends on the weather," he said.

The mural, titled "On the Shoulders of Giants," depicts each of the sciences housed in the building.

The space between the two buildings will become a courtyard that will be made available to students for recreation. Although a name for the courtyard has not been finalized, Rycek pointed out that the new name will honor Mary Morse.

According to Rycek, the timely construction process has been prompted by good management skills.

"Throughout the entire construction and renovation process Bruner Hall has remained functional for students and faculty at UNK," he said.

He credits the company in charge of the construction process, Beckenhauer Inc., for the opportune timeline of the construction.

"Beckenhauer has done a wonderful job of coordinating the entire project and we are very pleased with that," he said.

Jim Bargaen, Beckenhauer's superintendent credits the constant communication process with UNK officials for the timely process.

“We regularly talked to UNK officials and listened to what they needed in order to maintain Bruner Hall functional,” he said.

According to the Bruner Hall of Science Program Statement the \$14.5 million renovations are the second phase of a process that began in 2001. At that time Bruner Hall underwent a first phase of maintenance renovations at a cost of approximately \$6.4 million.

The initial steps toward the current renovation of Bruner Hall began with the demolition of the Mary Morse Lecture Hall in March 2008. Shortly after, in April 2008 the foundation work for the new addition began to occupy the space where MMLH once stood. A month later in May 2008 the renovation process began in Bruner Hall along with the base work for the brick mural on the west wall.

The restoration process has brought state of the art classrooms, laboratories, and research space. The primary spaces within the new addition will consist of a public lobby, the health sciences program area, five classrooms, a herbarium, and the planetarium.

Bruner was originally constructed in August 1966. The latest renovations have given the biology, chemistry, physics, and health sciences programs at UNK a jump start into a new era of research.

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