

New building begins new look

Shiny business, social science building at SFCC reflects campus turn toward Spokane River

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The first new building at Spokane Falls Community College in more than a decade highlights a lot of the differences between the design styles of yesterday and today.

Three low-slung, single-story buildings will be replaced by the new business and social science building, a three-story structure with a façade of glass. Windowless lecture halls will give way to classrooms with an expansive view of the nearby forests and hills. Dim linoleum hallways will be replaced with halls that are broken up with little communal areas for sitting and studying.

"This is great," said Gary Livingston, chancellor of the Community Colleges of Spokane, during a recent tour of the building. "Our faculty's going to go crazy when they get in here."

The project is named sn-w'ey'-mn, which is Inland Salish for a "place of commerce," and it will house classrooms, faculty offices and other facilities for the business and social science programs. Workers were wrapping up painting, electrical work and other finishing touches on the \$14 million building last week, and it's expected to be ready when classes begin Jan. 3.

The new building is part of an overall effort to reorient the SFCC campus – to give it a center that points more toward the Spokane River than Fort George Wright Drive.

"We're turning all of the campus back toward the river more," Livingston said. "We really want to accentuate the location, which wasn't done when the campus was built."

While there have been several recent remodeling or expansion projects at SFCC, this is the first new building since the early 1990s, when the technical arts building went up. Spokane Community College opened its first new building in a long time – a new science facility – just last year.

At nearly 70,000 square feet, sn-w'ey'-mn is about a third larger than the three classroom buildings it replaces. Those buildings, which went up in the 1960s, are slated for demolition, though they may be put to some temporary use first, said Anne Tucker, spokeswoman for CCS.

The buildings presented lots of maintenance problems for SFCC, including leaking roofs and difficulties with heating and cooling. The problems of old, deteriorating buildings isn't unique to SFCC, and a six-year state effort has been targeted at improving facilities at the state's two-year colleges.

In the 2007 budget, the Legislature directed \$22.8 million toward construction in the community college system.



Workers at Spokane Falls Community College put the finishing touches along windows last week on the newest addition to the campus since the early 1990s. The nearly 70,000-square-foot building has large amounts of glass to provide a more expansive feel for light and space and a view of the forest. The Spokesman-Review (Brian Plonka The Spokesman-Review)

Fast fact

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For the new SFCC building, committees of students and faculty members consulted on the design. Seattle artist Kelly McLain was commissioned to create a mobile-style artwork in the building's atrium.

The building also includes a lot of green technology, as is required for state construction projects, including the use of recycled materials, drought-resistant landscaping and efficient heating and cooling systems. The project earned a silver level under the so-called LEED standards – Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design – that are considered the benchmark of environment-friendly design.