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# Union expansion nears completion

By IEVA AUGSTUMS  
Staff Reporter

This fall, University of Nebraska-Lincoln students will have a \$13.5 million, new and improved Nebraska Union waiting at their footsteps.

Jackhammers, bulldozers and dust took over Nebraska Union in fall 1996 with the goal to construct a new student union by fall 1998.

"It has been over three years since initial project planning began on the union," Nebraska Union Director Daryl Swanson said. "The finished project is almost right in front of us."

Swanson said incoming UNL students couldn't have timed their arrival to the university any better.

"The timing is good," Swanson said. "It has been said that the first month of school is a blur. Plus, it is better for new students to see the later stages of construction."

Larry Blake, Nebraska Union

project manager, agreed.

"A lot of things happen in the end," Blake said. "Everything somehow comes together the way you planned."

Swanson said most areas of the union - the plaza, north entrance, art exhibit room, Student Involvement Offices, recreation room, big screen TV lounge, other lounge and food court dining space - should be accessible and in use by the fall.

Central construction, however, will be completed in mid-fall, he said.

The expansion and renovation project will add 55,000 square feet of new space and renovate 66,000 square feet of the existing union structure, he said.

Brad Muehling, Nebraska Union assistant project manager said the information desk on the first floor would relocate during the summer, and a portion of the lounge will remain open for student use.

In the fall, the information desk will relocate to the right of the new

north entrance and a secured art lounge and exhibit room will be to the left of the entrance, he said.

"We don't want to discourage students from using (the union)," Blake said. "But just as it has been, construction will still be going on."

The Copy Center, presently located in the University Bookstore, will relocate from the basement to the first floor to compliment an expanded 24-hour computer lab. The computer lab will be accessible from inside the union during normal hours, as well as through a west entrance after hours.

The second floor will feature a balcony which will overlook the plaza, fountain and greenspace. The new plaza, located outside of the north entrance, will remain the same size as the former Broyhill Plaza, which was demolished in January 1997. A new water feature will replace the old fountain. Swanson said the new water feature will still be known as Broyhill Fountain.

The rapid increase of student enrollment is the main reason for the union expansion, Swanson said. When the union was first built in 1938 there were 5,752 students attending UNL. After a renovation in 1958, there were 8,356 students. Ten years later, after the union's second renovation, there were 19,618 students.

"I cannot say that we never will need another expansion of the union," Swanson said. "It all depends on the students and their wants and needs."

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Scott McClurg



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