

UNM-Taos invests in science buildings, more space for students

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Built with a \$4 million bond awarded in 2016, the STEM facility comes as part of an initiative to ensure students at the UNM branch have every opportunity to learn and excel in the fields they choose while living in the Taos area.

The University of New Mexico-Taos is investing in a new building for science, technology, engineering and math students at its Klauer Campus and staff are hoping construction will be finished in time for the 2019 fall semester.

Built with a \$4 million bond awarded in 2016, the science and math facility comes as part of an initiative to ensure students at the UNM branch have every opportunity to learn and excel in the fields they choose while living in the Taos area.

“Students out here need opportunities into the STEM fields,” said UNMTaos CEO Patrick Valdez. “Rural communities and rural students should have access to those opportunities.”

Valdez said the new building will provide classrooms and labs for STEM classes and will also hold several areas for students to gather and study. The building will add over 10,000 square feet to the campus. While UNM Taos offers mainly two-year programs

for students, this new building will give them cutting edge materials and a modern space for learning, according to Valdez.

The new facility is under construction. Students will be able to use the new classrooms and labs by fall semester, according to officials.

Another opportunity for Klauer Campus expansion may be on the horizon as a College Pathways to Career Center bond is on the ballot during the November election. If voters approve the nearly \$4.3 million bond , the university will construct a 14,000 square-foot career center on the western side of the campus. The new building would house some of the classes and offices now operating in the downtown campus of Taos.

“There’s no plan to vacate the downtown area before we need to,” Valdez said. “It’s important for us to be down there. We love it.”

UNM-Taos leases the buildings east of Bataan Hall and Río Grande Hall. The proposed building at Klauer Campus could potentially move some of the activities away from the downtown area, but Río Grande and Bataan halls will remain under UNM’s umbrella.

UNM entered a lease purchase agreement for Bataan and Río Grande Halls in 2013 with the town of Taos for \$1 per year and maintenance and upkeep. The two buildings serve both the university and community as Bataan Hall has been renovated as an events arena, and Rio Grande Hall holds a majority of the nursing program for UNM Taos.

“(UNM) originally asked for Río Grande Hall and Bataan Hall to be donated to them for the development of various programs, including a business development center and a health center,” said town manager Rick Bellis. “Obviously, the renovations were done for the health sciences center, and it has been operating as such.”

Valdez said the university had no immediate plans to move out of Río Grande and Bataan.

Renovations for Bataan and Río Grande began in 2015 to convert the buildings into the Health Careers Training Center. The center includes a regular classroom as well as a simulation area for nurses and several other specialized classrooms for the various health programs offered by the university.