

Dirt turned for MU's new business school

■ Cornell Hall project expected to help university increase national standing in business education

BY STEVE FRIEDMAN

Business professors and administrators at the University of Missouri-Columbia are adamant about their desire to make the College of Business one of the top 10 publicly funded schools in the nation.

Fitting firmly into that long-range goal is the project MU has waited for more than eight years to start.

MU officially broke ground Sept. 18 on the site of its new business school — Cornell Hall — with more than 700 university, state and community leaders and students in attendance.

The college plans to do more to enhance its national reputation than simply build the new \$27-million-plus facility, however.

Bruce Walker, dean of the College of Business, said Cornell Hall will help the college achieve two priorities it wants to address in its curriculum: expanding and strengthening its masters in business administration (MBA) program and increasing the use of information technology in instruction.

"The building is just one part of the picture in expanding our educational services," Walker said. "We hope it's one way we can attract some of the brightest business students around."

The building also will provide a centralized location for the college's classes, he added.

While Middlebush Hall has been the main business building on campus, courses are also taught in three other buildings.

"That's not completely awful, but I think faculty and students don't get the interaction they need with all the college's curriculum not being under one roof," Walker said.

Faculty and administration also have complained that the more than 40-year-old Middlebush Hall lacks the technological and space needs for modern university instruction.

At 150,000 square feet, Cornell will be twice the size of Middlebush and will include 17 classrooms, two computer labs, a 500-seat auditorium, a 125-seat lecture hall and 15 smaller breakout rooms.

Cornell Hall is the university's project, but the bulk of its funding has come from outside sources.

The Missouri General Assembly appropriated more than \$17 million for the project, \$11 million of which was approved by Gov. Mel Carnahan this summer.

The other funding boost is coming from nearly \$10 million in private donations, mainly from MU alumni.

The largest private donation of \$3 million came from Harry M. Cornell Jr. and his wife, Ann. Cornell is chairman and CEO of Leggett & Platt Inc., a Fortune 500 company, based in Carthage, that produces and supplies components for bedding and furniture.

"We knew a long time ago that we couldn't depend on the state to fund this

entire project for the school," said Cornell, a 1950 graduate of MU's business college. "So that's why it has been so wonderful to see that private funding is paying for a large portion of this school."

Walker reiterated the commitment to technology the college will have because of the Cornells' donation. The college expects to use \$500,000 of the donation to fund an information systems professorship.

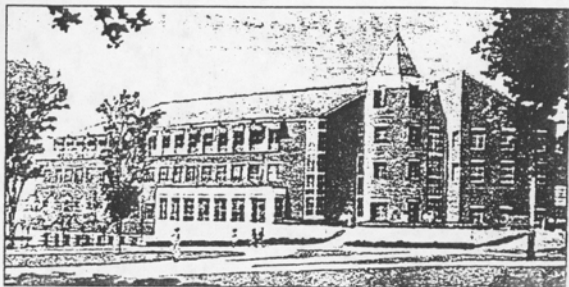
"That why this project is just much more than a name of building for me," Cornell said.

A discussion during a faculty meeting in late 1990 caused Walker to begin exploring whether a new building was possible. In 1991, MU agreed to study its space requirements. The study's results later that year determined Middlebush was too small for the college's needs. The university began its design and fundraising plans for the new hall in earnest in 1994.

Construction of Cornell Hall is expected to begin in December, pending final approval of the project by the University of Missouri system's board of curators. The building is expected to be completed by spring 2002, with a formal dedication in the fall.



Cornell Hall's future home at MU.



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