



SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY *at* NEW ORLEANS

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February 25, 2010

SUNO'S Clean Campus Project underway

NEW ORLEANS, LA—In addition to the construction of a new Information Technology Center and the remaining phases of Southern University at New Orleans' (SUNO) first-ever Student & Faculty Housing Facility, the latter of which opened in January, the University has embarked on a major beautification project on its Lake and Park campuses. Nearly five years ago, the 50-plus year old institution was devastated by floodwaters from both Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita.

The eleven buildings which comprise the Park Campus were flooded with between four and eleven feet of floodwater. The Lake Campus, once a barren field of land owned by SUNO, was converted into a makeshift campus with 45 temporary buildings constructed by both the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The temporary campus, then known as the North Campus, opened in Spring 2006, SUNO's first full semester after the 2005 hurricanes.

“There is still much to be done in terms of SUNO fully recovering, but the progress that we have made over the years makes the impact of Katrina and Rita seem like a distant memory,” said Victor Ukpole, Ph.D. the University's chancellor. “This Clean Campus Project represents an exciting time for us.”

The Clean Campus Project involves several components, including the power-washing and painting of several Park Campus buildings and the planting of trees and shrubberies around them, the installation of building identification signs, and the formation of a “green” playground on the Lake Campus near the Student & Faculty Housing Facility.

Robert Cannon, SUNO's assistant vice chancellor for administration, says that the greenery was selected in order to give the University a distinct look.

“There are palm trees, oaks and many others. The ‘green’ playground, when it's completed, will either be a total green-space filled with trees and shrubberies or either a walking trail or playground that will have lots of green-space,” he said. “SUNO is part of the historic Pontchartrain Park neighborhood, and we want our University to serve as an inspiration as the recovery of this area continues.”

MORE

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2 – SUNO Clean Campus Project

Students and faculty alike are pleased to see the changes taking place.

“I have always believed that our campus needed a significant number of trees to make it seem like a fit ‘home’ for our educational mission. Looking at these newly planted trees, I imagine how glorious they will be in ten years. They add beauty not only to our campus but to the whole neighborhood,” says Dr. Sara Hollis, Dean of the School of Graduate Studies.

Most of the Park Campus beautification is occurring on buildings which sit near Press Drive. During her second visit to SUNO in August 2009, U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano announced the awarding of more than \$32 million in funding to replace the University’s Old Science, New Science, Multipurpose and Clark buildings which are part of the Park Campus.

“Immediately upon taking office, President Barack Obama had SUNO on his radar, and shortly after taking office, he sent a team to SUNO to assess our needs, and we are forever grateful for the results,” said Ukpolo. “We are working closely with the Louisiana Office of Facility Planning & Control (FP&C) in order to get definite timelines for when construction on these buildings will commence. That’s the main reason why the beautification is taking place on the periphery of the Park Campus. Any improvements made to the interior of the Park Campus could be comprised due to forthcoming construction.”

One of the most anticipated reconstruction projects is the Leonard S. Washington Memorial Library which sits in the heart of SUNO’s campus. A major meeting between SUNO and FP&C officials recently happened, and it’s projected that the rebuilding will commence within the next six months

The look of the Lake Campus will continue to undergo changes when ground is broken for construction of a new College of Business building. Ground-breaking is tentatively scheduled to happen on March 24th.

Ukpolo believes that the improvements at SUNO contribute to the post-Katrina recovery of New Orleans as a whole.

“Our economic impact study that was released a little more than a year ago noted that for every dollar the State of Louisiana invests in SUNO, citizens get a \$7 dollar return. Given all of the projects that are taking place here, we may have to update the study. It’s a great sight to see a diverse group of individuals working on various projects that are associated with the rebuilding of our institution,” said Ukpolo. “Nearly five years ago, our entire University community, which includes our students, faculty, staff, alumni and Board of Supervisors, viewed the rebuilding of SUNO as an opportunity, despite the devastation we suffered. Our positive outlook and willingness to sacrifice and work hard are paying great dividends.”

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