

## Student and Alumni Center groundbreaking delayed

*Fund raising falls short of expectations*

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Groundbreaking for the \$31.5 million Student and Alumni Center (SAC) has been delayed, resulting from lower than expected private donations administrators said.

The delay, announced by UMKC Provost Bill Osborne at July's University of Missouri (UM) Board of Curators meeting, further postpones a project that was expected to start last May.

UMKC officials said private donations for the project total \$1.8 million, one-fourth of the \$7.2 million UMKC hoped to raise. The remaining \$24.3 million was expected to come mostly from an \$85, per-semester student fee approved by the Student Government Senate in April of 2002. The fee will be charged once groundbreaking occurs.

SGA President Geoff Gerling said there were four or five targeted donors for the project that were expected to donate in the millions.

"Clearly, that didn't happen," he said.

Shawn Gebhardt, student representative to the UM Board Of Curators, spoke about the fundraising effort.

"I haven't yet heard any convincing arguments for why we continue to pursue small numbers of very large donors rather than working harder to engage our greatest untapped resource - our large pool of alums."

Mary James, president of the UM Board of Curators, said the Board is disappointed by the delay.

"However, we look at this as an opportunity to review all possibilities and to then move forward in building a facility quickly and in the best interest of the students," she said.

To ensure that the \$1 million already spent on the project will accomplish part of the project's goals, project planners are considering some changes.

Combining the Student Center project with the Miller Nichols Library (MNL) renovation is the most probably change that will take place according to those involved. .

Pat Long said merging the two projects has been a possibility since February 2001 when UMKC representatives visited George Mason University's combined facility.

Joan Dean, interim dean of university libraries, said she believed it would not hinder the library's effort.

"I can't imagine that the MNL staff would not support this, nor that it will hurt MNL's own fund-raising," she said.

UMKC officials said a decision on any changes to the Student and Alumni Center would be made soon.

"Students should expect a decision to be made by October 2004," said John Allen, UMKC public relations director. Allen urges students who have ideas or questions about the project to contact Gerling or SGA Executive Vice President Tom Kernan.

"We hope to get a great deal of feedback on what students want so we can get this building right," said Gerling.

Gerling said he also expects the \$85 fee will be reviewed by the SGA Senate. He said that he would like to see the Senate take a new vote on the fee, regardless if it is increased or not.

"It is only fair to the students," Gerling said.

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