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UVSC Digital Learning Center on track for funding

Preliminary work has begun for high-tech library on campus

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OREM — All signs point to the library.

Utah Valley State College's lobbying efforts at the legislative session that starts Jan. 16 will be focused on the Digital Learning Center, a long-hoped-for high-tech library to replace the current library that is too small for UVSC's 24,000 students.

Its size has been noted by representatives for the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, which examines the school periodically to make sure its programs meet established academic standards.

The lobby effort is off to a good start. After all, the library project has landed at the top of a list that prioritizes government building-construction proposals.

The Digital Learning Center was ranked No. 1 on the State Building Board's priority list. And the project was "recommended by the governor. We're cautiously optimistic that the legislature will fund this project," said Val Peterson, a UVSC vice president.

Last year, the new library was also near the top of several building "wish lists" but was bypassed for funding. Instead, money went toward a major renovation of the University of Utah Marriott Library.

However, legislators told UVSC administrators to begin planning for the library. Lawmakers said they would reimburse the costs when they appropriate money for the project.

So far, UVSC administrators have spent about \$220,000 on architects and college library experts.

The school hired Salt Lake architects Cooper, Roberts, Simonsen Associates, Michaels Associates Design Consultants and New York architect Jacob Alspector.

With input from librarians, deans and faculty, they planned a 180,000-square-foot facility with an "information commons" where students can access academic journals by computer. Also planned are study areas for individuals and groups.

"One of the key factors is having them do group study and group learning," Peterson said. "It's a key part of education."

The state's Division of Facilities Construction and Management estimated the cost for the digital library at \$48 million.

"That estimate could be in fact as high as \$57 million," Peterson said.

The digital library would be built in a parking lot east of the Liberal Arts building.

Although the buzz around campus focuses on the "U" word — university — legislators probably will not hear UVSC lobbyists talk about university-status.

UVSC would have to begin offering graduate programs to qualify for university status. Graduate programs

would be dependent upon a library that could assist graduate-level research. And any name change from college to university would have to be approved by lawmakers.

"Regardless of the direction of the institution, this is a project of a critical need for Utah Valley State College to provide the quality education we're trying to provide," Peterson said.

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