KU Today: Construction begins on $82 million building for earth, energy research

New center is 'anchor' for KU's Innovation Way science initiative

This preliminary rendering shows an interior view of the planned Earth, Energy and Environment Center, or EEEC, on the KU campus. Construction on the building, adjacent to Lindley Hall, began in summer 2015. Enlarge photo

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The newest major building project to embark on Kansas University's main campus is the Earth, Energy and Environment Center, being constructed adjacent to Lindley Hall.

Construction work just began in July on the 130,000-square-foot, $82 million building — roughly half funded by donations — that will house teaching, research and collaborative spaces, said Robert Goldstein, distinguished professor of geology and associate dean of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, in KU’s College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

The EEEC aims to build on KU’s strengths in energy and environment research and education by integrating students and faculty working in the subjects, Goldstein said. Under its roof will be faculty from areas including the Department of Geology, Department of Chemical and Petroleum Engineering, the Tertiary Oil Recovery Program and the Department of Physics and Astronomy.

“Research in earth, energy and environment will take a giant leap forward because of the interdisciplinary nature of the program,” Goldstein said.
Plans for the building call for two towers rising from a connected base, Goldstein said.

The north tower, or building, will be called Ritchie Hall, after KU alumni Scott and Carol Ritchie of Wichita, who have "contributed greatly of their time, ideas and resources," Goldstein said.

The south building will be Slawson Hall, thanks to a generous gift from the Slawson family, Goldstein said. The building’s namesake, Don Slawson, who died in 2014, was a KU alumnus, oil and gas industry leader and past Kansas Board of Regents member.

Goldstein said the EEEC is considered an “anchor point” for Innovation Way. Part of KU’s Campus Master Plan, the Innovation Way initiative calls for linking science facilities campuswide to foster interdisciplinary teaching and research, according to the master plan.

“It is the first major facility of its kind on the campus,” Goldstein said of the EEEC. “It is truly interdisciplinary in its research. Its teaching will follow an engaged-learning model. And it will move our campus forward rapidly as a national leader in the integration of earth, energy and environment to make a difference for the people of Kansas.”