

UW-Platteville: Gov. Walker pledges support to university expansion

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PLATTEVILLE, Wis. – Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker pledged his support to the University of Wisconsin-Platteville's Sesquicentennial Hall – the proposed \$55 million engineering building – and the \$23 million Boebel Hall renovation project.

Both projects were passed by the Wisconsin Joint Committee on Finance by a 16-0 vote, and the governor said traditionally the approved capital projects remain in the budget that will be forwarded to him in approximately two weeks.

"I am here today to affirm to you that I will sign the budget with each of these projects fully intact," Gov. Walker said in a press conference Tuesday morning at Engineering Hall. "We know these projects are not only important for the education and training of the future workforce, but during the construction phase they are pretty important in terms of the men and women who will be involved in building, designing and putting together these projects and the positive impact it will have on the regional economy as well as the long-term benefits. You have more than three-quarters of your graduates, particularly in areas like engineering, staying in Wisconsin."

Sesquicentennial Hall would replace Ottensman Hall, built in 1966, and accommodate up to 800 new freshman and 200 transfer engineering students. UW-Platteville graduates the second most engineers in the state with 75 percent of the graduates remaining in Wisconsin over the past four years.

The Boebel Hall renovations will complete a project that began in 2010 and renovate 52 rooms, including 17 labs. Built in 1977, Boebel Hall houses biology, one of the key programs in educating students in the high-need health care profession. An additional 300 biology and pre-professional program majors can be

accommodated by the renovations.

Chancellor Dennis J. Shields thanked the governor, local legislators Sen. Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green), Rep. Travis Tranel (R-Cuba City) and Rep. Todd Novak (R-Dodgeville) (all who were in attendance) and said the projects “are sorely needed and align quite well with the needs of the state.”

Both the chancellor and the governor mentioned the increased need for engineers, particularly with the proposed Foxconn Technology Group plant in southeastern Wisconsin. The \$10 billion facility would be 11 times the size of Lambeau Field, Gov. Walker said. Previous accounts have indicated Foxconn would employ 13,000 workers, and the governor said between 19,000 and 26,000 indirect jobs would also be created, bringing the economic impact to \$1.4 billion annually to the state. The UW-Platteville expansion will help in educating that workforce, he said.

“It’s not just for the engineers who will go on to work at Foxconn,” Gov. Walker said. “It’s for the engineers, businesses and other leaders who are going to beright here in Platteville, Cuba City and Dodgeville. They’re going to be all over this region and all across the state. They are going to be in that supply chain and will need to be trained and educated as well.”

In the question-and-answer session with media, Gov. Walker said the Sesquicentennial Hall and Boebel Hall projects would have passed independently of Foxconn.

“Just based on workforce alone, these projects were compelling enough in their own right, with or without Foxconn,” the governor said. “It’s the added urgency with Foxconn. Even with Foxconn not on the table, these are things I would be happy to sign into law.”