

Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce: Regional legislators applaud inclusion of UWEC Science Building in Gov. Evers' proposed capital budget

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The Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce and Chippewa Valley regional legislators are praising the announcement that Governor Tony Evers' has included completion funding for UW-Eau Claire's Science and Health Sciences Building in his proposed 2023-25 state capital budget.

"As much as this project is critical to UW-Eau Claire fulfilling its educational mission, it's even more important for the economic impact it will have in the region and the state for our future workforce and for rural healthcare," said David W. Minor, President and CEO of the Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber is encouraging state lawmakers to ensure that the project is approved as part of the final state capital budget.

The new building will replace UWEC's outdated and deteriorating Phillips Science Hall with a new, state-of-the-art building that will house UWEC's STEM and Health Sciences departments. It also includes lab spaces funded by Mayo Clinic as part of its collaborative research partnership with the university, and will be the home of a high performance computer array donated by Hewlett Packard Enterprise.

"The UWEC Science and Health Sciences Building project is an important investment in our area's long-term prosperity and workforce development," agrees Rep. Rob Summerfield (R-Bloomer). "This project will have a significant impact on

our area.”

The first phase of funding was enumerated in the 2019-21 state budget, with \$231.3 million now recommended by the UW System Board of Regents and Governor Evers to finish the project.

“By approving the first phase project, we understood that we would need to complete the second phase as well,” said Senator Jesse James (R-Altoona). “We are looking forward to getting this done. There are workforce needs that this building will help address, and the Legislature will do our part to help lend support where we can.”

UWEC officials note that design work has moved forward to complete the project efficiently as a single building as soon as funding is approved.

“The impact of the UW-Eau Claire Science Hall building project cannot be underestimated for our communities,” said Rep. Warren Petyrk (R-Eleva), who himself is a graduate of UWEC. “This project will continue the knowledge boom our area is already experiencing and will ensure that we remain a national leader in undergraduate research. It also helps foster the proud legacy our public institutions have partnering with local business like Mayo Clinic Health Systems to help train our future workforce.”

The broad geographic reach of the project was also affirmed by Rep. Dave Armstrong (R-Rice Lake), who said, “I support the UW-Eau Claire Science and Health Sciences Building as it’s essential to train and grow those individuals looking for careers in the healthcare industry of our region. UW-Eau Claire has demonstrated outstanding and creative partnership programs such as the one it has forged with Mayo Clinic. These relationships coupled with the new Science and Health Sciences Building will further create much needed additional capacity for those looking for Health and Science career pathways.”

Freshman Rep. Karen Hurd (R-Fall Creek) took note of the opportunity for UWEC to graduate more students in key fields. “This is a project that would benefit the entire state of Wisconsin,” Hurd said. “The current science building has long been in need of replacement as STEM education has advanced. The proposed new science building would enable the university to increase the number of graduates from the STEM fields of study which would contribute to the Wisconsin workforce. The private-public partnership with the Mayo Clinic Health System in this project will be

a significant benefit to our communities.”