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October 8, 2007

Educational Sciences Building unveiled

After renovating a building left vacant since 1988, CEHD has a place of its own.

By Mike Rose

Correction

This article incorrectly stated the name of the building. The name should read Education Sciences Building.

University President Bob Bruininks cut the ribbon Friday on a newly renovated building that had been vacant since 1988.

The new Education Sciences Center is a renovation of the Mineral Resources Research Center, which had been vacant since 1988 and is located in the historic Knoll Area of campus. The project cost \$21 million and took roughly two and a half years to complete.

The educational psychology department of the College of Education and Human Development will move into the building, as well as two other research centers that collaborate with CEHD.

Bruininks, the former dean of CEHD, said the idea of renovating the site had been in the works for nearly 15 years.

"This building fits the direction of the new (CEHD)," he said. "This is a very special day here at the University of Minnesota."

Before the Education Sciences Building came about, the three entities were scattered around campus.

Susan Hupp, chair of the educational psychology department, said being in a central location will be a welcome relief.

"I'm excited," she said. "We'll be so much more vital being together."

Others shared Hupp's excitement about having a centralized location.

Kyla Wahlstrom, director of the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement, said she was looking forward to the collaborative opportunities the new building will bring for her group.

"There are common spaces here," she said.

"We have lots of places to meet and think."

The project kicked off in 2005 with a yearlong design phase, said Mike Jordan, the principal architect for the Collaborative Design Group. Construction lasted about a year and a half, he said.

The goal of the renovation was to modernize the building while staying true to its historic features, Jordan said. He also said those moving into the building wanted something with its own identity.

"The college didn't want to live in a museum," he said.

The result is a building that has a very industrial look to it. Inside, pipes and valves are exposed along the high ceiling. Steel support beams come down to the floor and add to a warehouse style.

Still, the building features newly renovated offices and new windows,

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ventilation and light fixtures.

The main feature of the interior is the third-floor atrium, which features a high-rising skylight. From the atrium, much of the new interior is visible.

"It's been a fun project to work on," Jordan said.

The Collaborative Design Group specializes in historic renovations, Jordan said. Past projects have included turning the old Sears Building into the Midtown Global Market and renovating Nicholson Hall.

Kevin Ross, senior project manager from University capital planning, said the biggest challenge in the project was removing lead and asbestos contamination from the site, which had long been used as an industrial lab.

Beyond the contamination, the site had been left in shambles and was used as shelter by homeless people while it sat vacant, John Romano, a faculty member in CEHD's counseling program, said.

"It looked like someone just left it on a Friday afternoon," he said. "It was a waste."

Engineers also faced the challenge of meeting energy guidelines at the site.

Peter Potvin, the principal mechanic for LKPB Engineers, said the Education Sciences Building exceeds minimum requirements for the Minnesota Energy Code, but could have done even better if it were a new building.

Because the renovation left the original brick walls intact, Potvin said engineers were unable to add new insulation, which reduces heating costs.

However, he said reusing urban land is a more energy-efficient project than constructing a new building.

The three new occupants are expected to officially move in Oct. 16 or 17, while finishing touches are completed.

The building still needs to be furnished and many of its rooms need signs outside the doors. The bathrooms were also a work-in-progress as of Friday.

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