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THE 1ST STEP FOR RENOVATING MEMORIAL HALL AT WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY BEGINS

MACOMB – The Capital Development Board (CDB), Western Illinois University (WIU) President Al Goldfarb and local legislators celebrated today the start of rehabilitation work on Memorial Hall. Governor Rod R. Blagojevich recently announced $12 million in funding to begin renovating Memorial Hall into a first class facility.

Rehabilitating Memorial Hall at WIU is part of Gov. Blagojevich’s Opportunity Returns strategy to create more jobs, attract new businesses and spur economic development across the state. This renovation will replace an out-of-date building constructed in 1962, with a high-tech learning facility that will encourage economic development in the community.

“Memorial Hall, as it stands, can’t keep pace with the ever-changing and fast-paced world of technology,” said Gov. Blagojevich. “If we want our students to be able to go out there and earn good paying jobs and attract new businesses to the area, they have to have a facility that is able to accommodate the latest technology and the space necessary to learn the skills they need to know now, and in the future.”

Memorial Hall originally housed the University Library, but is currently home to academic support services, student advisors, The University Counseling Center, disability support services, computer support services, visual productions and many other services and programs. These services and programs will be moved to temporary locations across campus, which will require some renovation to accommodate faculty and staff. Renovating the temporary spaces will be the first step in the much bigger project of rehabilitating Memorial Hall. But once it re-opens in a few years, Memorial Hall will have a new floor plan, new roof, new heating and lighting systems and updated wiring to allow the latest in computer and communications equipment.

“I am pleased that Memorial Hall will be renovated and I would like to thank Gov. Blagojevich for making this happen,” said Sen. John Sullivan (D-Quincy). “This project will bring $12 million into our local economy and create jobs. The new Memorial Hall, with its high-tech classrooms, will also help Western Illinois University continue its tradition as a premier state institution.”

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“Students need to learn in a 21\textsuperscript{st} century facility with 21\textsuperscript{st} century technology in order to compete in a 21\textsuperscript{st} century world,” said CDB Acting Executive Director Jan Grimes. “Renovating Memorial Hall will ensure that students have the facilities they need to help them attain their educational and professional goals.”

As a part of Gov. Blagojevich’s \textit{Opportunity Returns} strategy, Memorial Hall will once again allow students to keep pace with the ever-changing world by learning the latest technology in a state-of-the-art facility.

The Capital Development Board manages renovations, repairs and new construction of state facilities such as mental health centers, veteran’s homes, university and college facilities and historic buildings. Capital Development Board projects include the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, the new State Emergency Operations Center in Springfield and the World Shooting and Recreational Complex in Sparta.

Gov. Blagojevich’s \textit{Opportunity Returns} regional economic development strategy is the most aggressive, comprehensive approach to creating jobs in Illinois’ history. Since a one-size-fits-all approach to economic development just doesn’t work, the Governor has divided the state into 10 regions – each with a regional team that is empowered and expected to rapidly respond to opportunities and challenges. \textit{Opportunity Returns} is about tangible, specific actions to make each region more accessible, more marketable, more entrepreneurial and more attractive to businesses. It is about upgrading the skills of the local workforce, increasing the access to capital, opening new markets, improving infrastructure, and creating and retaining jobs. \textit{Opportunity Returns} is about successfully partnering with companies and communities, both large and small, to help all of Illinois reach its economic potential.

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