

April 5, 2017

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WCU schedules contractor outreach forums at 3 WNC community colleges

CULLOWHEE – With several major construction and renovation projects looming on campus, Western Carolina University has announced a series of outreach forums designed to provide information to Western North Carolina-based contractors, subcontractors and construction companies and to encourage them to participate in the projects.

Officials in WCU's Department of Facilities Management have been working with Rich Price, director of the Jackson County Office of Economic Development, to organize contractor outreach forums at Haywood Community College in Clyde, Tri-County Community College in Murphy and Southwestern Community College in Sylva.

“Enhancing university partnerships and facilitating economic development in the community and across the region is an important part of WCU's 2020 Vision strategic plan,” said Matt Ketchum, WCU's director of facilities planning, design and construction. “To the extent possible, we want to try to increase the number of local companies and workers involved in campus projects, including historically underutilized businesses in the region.”

Forums are scheduled for 4:30 until 6 p.m. at the following locations:

Haywood Community College, Charles M. Beall Auditorium, Tuesday, April 18.

Tri-County Community College, 21 Campus Circle, Murphy campus, Tuesday, April 25.

Southwestern Community College, Room 102, Burrell Conference Center, Sylva campus, Thursday, April 27.

Over the next few years, WCU will be constructing a replacement for its 1970s-era Natural Sciences Building, a \$110 million project funded following the passage of the \$2 billion Connect NC bond package in 2016. The effort will entail construction of a new science classroom and laboratory facility and demolition of the existing science building.

Two residence hall projects also are on the drawing boards. A project on the upper portion of campus may include renovation of the existing Buchanan Hall, an outdated facility with 180 beds, and an addition of space for up to 600 more beds to create updated residence facilities; or, it could entail the demolition of Buchanan and construction of new facilities of up to 800 beds at or near the site of Brown Hall, which is currently undergoing renovation to transform it into a modern dining facility.

A second on-campus student housing project is in the early planning stages, which would locate a new residence hall on a site to be determined on the lower section of campus.

Also in the works is a parking deck facility, which is in the design and siting phases with construction expected

to begin in late 2018.

Other upcoming WCU projects include removal and replacement of the exterior walls of the Ramsey Regional Activity Center, changes to Memorial Drive infrastructure, an addition to the University Print Shop, relocation of food service options from A.K. Hinds University Center to Courtyard Dining Hall, three projects at the Highlands Biological Station and construction of a telecommunications structure.

Designers and contractors scheduled to participate in the outreach forums are Lord Aeck Sargent, Clark Nexsen and Watson Tate Savory, architects; Affinity (abatement); CDC (civil engineering); and Skanska USA and Vannoy Construction, construction managers.

For more information about the forums, contact Matt Ketchum at 828-227-7441.

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