

New MC Law campus drawing attention, students

Long-awaited downtown Jackson project a recruiting tool for school.

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JACKSON — On December 1, 2005, the Mississippi College (MC) School of Law unveiled its newly-completed campus in downtown Jackson with a reception and open house. Spirits were high and the crowd was large as a goal several years in the making was realized.

“This has been a longstanding need at the School of Law,” said Dr. Jim Rosenblatt, dean of the School of Law. “When recruiting students, we first emphasize teaching and our caring, professional faculty. Then, we emphasize the physical plant, followed by the ‘legal laboratory’ that downtown Jackson offers, being the seat of state government and the center of business in the state. So, amenities are very important, and we feel the new campus offers a strong recruiting tool.”

Dean Korsak is just completing his studies at MC School of Law, and, as a three-year student, has seen the renovations take shape. A native of Rhode Island who married a Mississippi girl, Korsak said such upgrades as wireless Internet connectivity will be a plus for the school when prospective students are looking for a collegiate home.

“It’s very exciting, and I and other students who I am in contact with are very impressed with the work that we have seen on campus,” Korsak said. He admitted that the lack of amenities such as wireless Internet access caused him to hesitate when choosing the MC School of Law. “Now, there is no excuse for students around the nation not to choose MC School of Law,” he added.

In with the new

The new School of Law, located on Griffith Street, encompasses an 18,000-square-foot classroom addition that includes audio-visual upgrades throughout, a recently renovated administration building and a new freestanding student and conference center. The initial design phase focused on creating a new 18,000 square-foot central atrium framed by high-tech classrooms, lecture halls, Moot Court room, jury room, judge’s chambers and student lounge, as well as a new, gated parking lot.

The new, 10,000-square-foot conference center comprises a bookstore, snack bar and dining area, as well as the conference center, which can accommodate 190 in desks or more than 300 in

seats. (It also has a food court offering Starbucks coffee.) A raised stage and high-tech video capability allow the School of Law to use the room for a variety of presentations and programs.

To resolve the need for a contemporary legal library, a design was chosen that created one by enclosing the existing garage area. The development provides the school with additional stack space for the library, which houses more than 300,000 volumes and an extensive microfilm collection and allows the service areas to expand in the existing building.

The Jackson-based architectural firm Cooke Douglass Farr Lemons, Ltd. was commissioned to create the multi-phased expansion and renovation plan. The general contractor on the project was Mid State Construction Inc., also of Jackson. (Cooke Douglass and Mid State received a 2005 Merit Award from the Associated Builders and Contractors for the work on the new Student Conference Center.) The total project took 29 months to complete with much of the work having to be done during brief times when classes were not in session.

Bigger and better

Space is of prime importance to the MC School of Law. The school currently enrolls nearly 500 students, with 2005-2006 representing its largest entering class at nearly 200 students. With the new campus, those numbers are only expected to rise.

While the extra space is welcome, those at the School of Law stress that the quality of instruction has been improved not just by the new campus, but recent faculty additions, as well. Dr. Michael McCann is nationally recognized in the area of sports law, and Dr. Gregory Bowman is just as renowned in the area of international law. Bowman was quick to point out that the new campus enhances his classroom instruction, and agrees that the amenities put the MC School of Law on a national footing.

“The school has always offered high-quality instruction, and that is enhanced by the new campus,” Bowman said. “The boundary between regional and national programs is being erased. That’s the trend, and the new campus makes us competitive nationally.”

Rosenblatt stressed that none of this would have been possible without the support of Mississippi College. MC president Dr. Lee Royce said the new School of Law is a win-win situation.

“The law school is our crown jewel,” Royce said. “Just as with our graduate programs, the MC School of Law sets us apart and elevates us to a status we would not have without it.”

Happy donors

Behind this successful construction/renovation project is a successful

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fundraising campaign, which is ongoing. Begun in 2003, The Building Campaign is a five-year effort to raise \$6 million for construction and renovations. Thirty-two months into the campaign, it had netted \$2.8 million, the highest level of support in the school’s history.

This is more impressive considering the campaign is still in its “quiet phase.” Looking to recruit donors, school officials called in a handful of prospects to ask for their financial support. This phase was extremely successful, landing a number of key donors, especially Hunter Lund and Sam Millette, both School of Law alumni, whose large gifts created

“momentum,” said Thorne Butler, director of development and alumni relations at the school. Gifts from 17 donors, which ranged from \$25,000 to \$500,000 from both individuals and businesses, provided a firm financial base.

So, expectations are high as the campaign enters the public phase. At press time, a mail-out to 4,000 alumni and friends was being prepared. When asked if the MC School of Law would meet its \$6-million goal, Butler answered “definitely.”

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