

From: [Leah D Nixon](#)
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Subject: Optometry Building at Ferris Closer to Reality
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Included below is a press release regarding the capital outlay budget, which includes an appropriation of \$20,175,000 for a new optometry facility at Ferris State University, and was passed through the Legislature on Thursday and moved to Gov. Granholm for her signature. Further information is available by contacting Leah Nixon, assistant director of News Services.

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New Optometry Building for Ferris One Step Closer to Reality

BIG RAPIDS – Ferris State University officials are confident that state funding to build a new College of Optometry building on the Big Rapids campus is finally within reach.

The capital outlay budget, which includes an appropriation of \$20,175,000 for a new optometry facility at Ferris, passed through the Legislature on Thursday and has moved to Gov. Jennifer Granholm for her signature.

The University has already funded and completed the programming phase for a new Michigan College of Optometry building and Center for Collaborative Healthcare Education but requires state funds to proceed with construction.

Ferris President David Eisler applauded state legislators for their support. “Funding for this project is a direct result of the strong concerted efforts of our legislators, Sen. Michelle McManus and Rep. Darwin Booher. From her leadership position on the joint capital outlay committee, and as chair of the conference committee, Sen. McManus has been critical in guiding this proposal; and as a member of the outlay committee Rep. Booher has worked throughout to support this process.

“We are very grateful to both of these leaders for help and support in Lansing,” Eisler added. “Our proposal was fortunate to enjoy the support of both the House and Senate Appropriation chairs, Rep. George Cushingberry and Sen. Ron Jelinek, as well as the current Joint Capital Outlay Committee Chair Morris Hood III. We also look forward to Gov. Granholm’s support in signing the funding for our project.”

McManus (R-Lake Leelanau) said, “It is a great day for Ferris State University and for the Michigan College of Optometry. We have a wonderful opportunity to bring young people to this profession and to learn in an environment that is one of great quality. As former chair of the Joint Capital Outlay Committee, this truly was my No.1 priority.”

Booher (R-Evart) noted, “This new state-of-the-art building will solidify Ferris’ standing as a top-tier university at the national level. The new building will enhance Ferris’ health

education curriculum, including the only optometric program in Michigan, and prepare students for jobs in these dynamic and growing fields. Funding approval for the building marks the culmination of years of hard work on the part of Ferris officials, state lawmakers and the state as a whole. Our local area also will benefit through the creation of local jobs in construction and other sectors.”

Eisler said Ferris would not have been able to move this project forward without the help of the Michigan Optometric Association and the faculty of the Michigan College of Optometry. “MOA members across the state have made this their highest legislative priority, not to mention the strong commitment and dedication from Michigan College of Optometry faculty who have worked more than a decade to make this dream a reality.”

To date, more than \$1.25 million has been pledged in support of operating and matching funds for the modern health care facility, which will offer state-of-the-art eye and vision care and support collaborative study in health education, in addition to a \$1 million gift from the Dow Foundation. As the only college of optometry in Michigan and one of 18 in the country that has trained the majority of optometrists in the state, Eisler said a new facility is critical to the MCO’s ability to continue to provide and support access to high-quality eye care throughout Michigan.

“Students being educated for the health professions should be trained in an environment that, as much as possible, is similar to that in which they will function after graduation. They should be exposed to a wide variety of patients, utilize state-of-the-art equipment and learn to work with support personnel and other health providers in this era of managed care. Patients treated by our students deserve a facility that will allow us to provide them state-of-the-art care,” said Dr. Nancy Peterson-Klein, interim dean of the Michigan College of Optometry.

A residence hall built in 1967 and converted in 1977 currently houses the MCO and does not accommodate full-sized classroom or laboratory space; its patient care clinic on the fifth and sixth floors does not provide access for the elderly, visually impaired and disabled; and the heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems are outdated and inadequate.

“Since the founding of the college, the scope of optometric practice has advanced to include the diagnosis and treatment of eye disease, training in the use of pharmaceuticals, fitting of soft and extended wear contact lenses, pre- and post-operative care of surgical patients and much more. From the standpoint of educating optometrists for today’s health care market, the college has long outgrown its original, out-dated home in Pennock Hall,” said Dr. Mark Swan, chief of pediatrics and binocular vision services for MCO, president of the Michigan Optometric Association and chief of optometry at St. Mary’s Mercy Medical Center in Grand Rapids.

“It is impossible to serve client needs and expand the program without this new facility,” he said. “With the new facility, admissions will be expanded, leading to a significant growth in the number of optometrists prepared for the state of Michigan and helping address a critical shortage of practitioners.”

Additionally, it is anticipated that with a new 91,000-square-foot facility the current number of patient encounters in the eye and vision care clinic of more than 19,450 annually will increase by at least 10,000 per year with a ground floor, re-designed clinic.

“MCO’s outreach to the region is significant. Beyond its immediate clinic service area, the MCO participates in a number of programs for low-income families and needy children. They have conducted clinics for migrant field workers, created a community-based eye clinic in Baldwin and made medical mission trips to Dominica, Africa and underserved countries,” Swan said.

A new auditorium, classrooms, wet/dry laboratories and clinical areas of a new facility would not only be available for MCO students but by students and faculty from the Colleges of Allied Health Sciences and Pharmacy, helping these colleges address aged facilities and overcrowded areas.

In addition, a Center for Lifelong Learning and Competency would utilize distance/Web-based technology to provide optometrists throughout Michigan with opportunities for continuing education on the latest developments in the field.

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