

Lehigh Breaks Ground on the Health, Science & Technology Building

By Lehigh University News
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As Founder's Weekend 2019 got under way, the Lehigh community gathered to celebrate the formal groundbreaking for the Health, Science & Technology building. The new building, scheduled to open in 2021, will serve as the future home of the College of Health, support innovative research from throughout the university and open up new collaborations between Lehigh and the South Bethlehem community.

The facility is one of the cornerstone initiatives of Lehigh's Path to Prominence plan, by which the university intends to expand its impact and cement its place among the finest and most distinguished universities in the world. The sustainably-designed facility will provide modern, flexible research and teaching space for faculty working across the university. It is intended to encourage an interdisciplinary culture, provide functional and flexible collaborative spaces, and serve as an important new crossroads for Lehigh students, external industry partners and the public.

Provost Pat Farrell told those gathered that the groundbreaking is "a huge milestone in our progress in developing the College of Health." To Farrell's left are Brent Stringfellow, associate vice president of Facilities and University Architect, and Whitney Witt, inaugural dean of the College of Health.

"When he founded Lehigh, Asa Packer insisted it offer both a classical and technical education," said Lehigh President John Simon '19P. "You could say he was interdisciplinary before interdisciplinary was cool. It is fitting then that we celebrate the Health, Science and Technology building on Founder's Day Weekend. HST will be a flagship building for interdisciplinary research while serving as the home of our new College of Health."

Joining Simon at the groundbreaking were Lehigh Board Chair Kevin L. Clayton '84 '13P, Provost Pat Farrell, Bethlehem Mayor Robert Donchez and Whitney Witt, inaugural dean of the College of Health. The ceremony was led by Brent Stringfellow, associate vice president of Facilities and University Architect, and was attended by members of the campus community.

Clayton called the occasion a "special day" for Lehigh, noting that the new facility will build on the university's long-standing success as a forward-thinking institution of higher learning.

"Lehigh has a long history of leadership in innovation, going all the way back 155 years, to our founder Asa Packer," Clayton said. "Fittingly, this

building is being designed to be able to evolve and change, so that down the road we can adapt to the challenges of the future."

Clayton also noted the building's importance to the South Bethlehem community. Just a few months after the university celebrated the opening of the SouthSide Commons student living facility—one that will build a stronger connection between the university and the city—Lehigh is again showing its commitment to its community through HST, he said.

"So here we go again, building a bridge from the past to the present to the future," he said.

Anchoring the northeast corner of campus, the building will provide a welcoming gateway into campus, inviting partners and the public to engage with the activities taking place there. The building will include a space, outfitted with the latest technology and media options, reserved for community gatherings and forums.

Donchez commended Simon and the Lehigh trustees for making their vision of both the HST building and the College of Health a reality, and said the building reflected the ever-strengthening relationship between the city and the university. The building, and the work that will be conducted there, will benefit both the university and the citizens of South Bethlehem for years to come, he said.

"The Health, Science & Technology building will be an additional means to strengthen the partnerships between the City of Bethlehem and Lehigh University," Donchez said. "The new College of Health will be a force in the community focused on improving health care for families, women and children, not only from a physical health standpoint but from a mental health perspective as well."

Organized in a fundamentally different way than traditional research facilities, the 195,000-square-foot HST building will dramatically increase Lehigh's capacity for interdisciplinary research by immersing faculty and students in an environment designed to catalyze interdisciplinary research and shifting the manner in which knowledge is pursued.

Farrell said the building's innovative design, and the College of Health's unique approach to population health research and education, were informed by the hard work of many members of the campus community over the course of several years. The ideas and contributions of those faculty and staff, he said, were instrumental in the development of both the building and the college.

"In part we are here to celebrate a groundbreaking for a building, yes," Farrell said. "But this is also a huge milestone in our progress in developing the College of Health. ... I want to thank Whitney for taking up the challenge and charge of leading the college, and getting us off the ground."

Witt expressed her thanks to the many members of the campus community who have been contributing to the development of the college. It is a college that builds on many established strengths at Lehigh, she said, but it will also bring the university's interdisciplinary, innovative spirit into a new and growing field.

"HST will be a flagship building for interdisciplinary research while serving as the home of our new College of Health," said Lehigh President John Simon '19P. "We are going to train the next generation of innovative and diverse scientists in the field of population health, with a focus on health innovation and technology," she said. "That's what's going to make us stand out. ... What's exciting about population health is that we are going to be teaching people about data science that stands to improve the lives of millions of people."

Lehigh's Health, Science & Technology building is expected to open in 2021.