The University of Michigan-Flint
FY2012 Capital Outlay Project Request

Completion French Hall Classroom Building Renovations

The first, second and third floors of French Hall were renovated as part of FY2006 Capital Outlay project request. In this submission, we request funding to renovate the remaining fourth and fifth floor of French Hall.

Total Project Cost: $6.3 million

Is the project a renovation or new construction? Renovation

Is a five-year master plan available? Yes

Are professionally developed program statement and/or schematic plans currently available? Yes

Are match resources currently available? Yes

Has the University identified available operating funds? Yes

A. Project Description Narrative

French Hall Classroom Building

The University proposes to renovate the remaining floors in French Hall. This renovation’s chief purpose will be to enhance the ability of the campus to meet the learning needs of its students, the instructional needs of its faculty, and the functional needs of its supporting staff. Every aspect of the renovations will proceed with one core purpose: to make the educational experience that UM-Flint students enjoy as effective, up-to-date, and as productive as possible. Effective, in the sense that the outcomes of instruction and study will meet their stated purposes; up-to-date, in that students will find the physical facilities complementing their instructors’ new approaches and techniques in pedagogy; and productive, in that these renovations will contribute to an education that helps equip UM-Flint students to assume roles as constructive, conscientious citizens of the state of Michigan. They will help bring to fruition a learning community embracing student mastery of ideas and methods, more effective faculty instruction and research, and creative endeavors across the community—and beyond.
The great majority of the University’s graduates (over 80 percent) have chosen to continue to live, work, and pay taxes in the State of Michigan. As noted in the University’s 2012 capital out plan, over 17,000 University of Michigan-Flint graduates reside in Genesee County and the contiguous six counties. Thus, these renovations will serve the needs of dedicated Michigan residents and their families.

The renovations will transform awkward, outdated, counter-productive spaces and facilities—spaces and facilities that now actually interfere with effective learning and teaching—into a thoroughly contemporary setting that supports the entire academic enterprise. They will bring long-needed improvements both to students’ classroom experience, and to their overall lives on campus.

To dwell briefly on the most basic of building (and human) needs, we should also mention our intent, through this request, to equip the UM-Flint Theatre—which shares its lobby with French Hall. Thanks to a design oversight, the restrooms nearest the theatre are small, cramped, and not handicap accessible. Owing to the facilities’ limitations, people attending an activity in the theatre, whether a play, a speech, or other program, must often journey all the way to the middle of French Hall to find a usable restroom—and visitors with disabilities have no choice. This is not acceptable. It is at best inconvenient for everyone who visits the theatre; at worst, it could easily deter persons with disabilities from attending functions in the theatre.

B. Other Alternatives Considered

The University has three basic alternatives regarding French Hall. They are: a) the status quo: Leave the buildings as is; b) demolition and replacement; and c) renovation. Given the building’s age and general condition, the only logical alternative is renovation. The status quo is unacceptable; demolition is out of the question. Renovation, however, holds the promise of breathing new life into the building and of allowing the University to make its classrooms state-of-the-art.

C. Programmatic Benefit to State Taxpayers and Specific Clientele or Constituencies

This project will allow the University to meet the educational needs of future students and graduates in an environment that they will find both technologically sophisticated, as well as collegial and oriented toward interactive, experiential learning.

The ultimate beneficiaries of all the renovations, upgrades, and initiatives described here will be the students who choose to attend the University of Michigan-Flint. We must not forget Governor Granholm’s emphatic invocation of a technologically-sophisticated workforce as an important part of the answer to the state’s economic concerns. As David Hollister, past director of the Michigan Depart of Labor & Economic Growth wrote, Michigan’s economic base “is
shifting from manufacturing to information and services," a shift that requires us to prepare the work for more technologically challenging jobs."

Governor Granholm has pointed out that it is "clear that our state's path to a robust economy with good paying 21st century jobs requires all our residents to complete their education beyond high school." Bringing increasing numbers of students from the Flint area—one particularly hard-hit by the transition from an industrial to an information economy—is a critical function of the University of Michigan – Flint that this renovation project will facilitate.

As we focus on the state's and the region's economic situation, and on the University's desire and obligation to help improve it, we shall remember that education at the University of Michigan-Flint not only equips students to assume responsible positions in the careers of their choice; it also helps equip them with a broader and deeper understanding of what it means to live a full life whose riches transcend material concerns; and helps them better grasp what it means to live in creative, constructive rapport with their fellow citizens. These considerations, too, are always part of the University of Michigan educational experience.

D. Funding Resources

The funding for the University's share of the total project cost will be made available from University of Michigan Flint central administration sources