



Projects to expand UWA student housing on schedule

By Wayne Grayson Staff Writer

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LIVINGSTON | University of West Alabama trustees learned Wednesday that two projects to expand student housing on campus are on schedule.

In September, trustees voted to borrow \$31 million to renovate and expand Hoover Apartments by 96 beds and to build Gilbert Hall, a 461-bed dormitory across from the Student Union Building.

The completion of both projects will allow administrators to close the aging Speith and Selden dorms, which would eliminate 416 beds. But the net gain in on-campus housing will be 141 beds, and, just as important, the projects will provide what trustees and administrators consider a badly needed update to student housing.

“To continue to be competitive against institutions we are competing against, housing will have to be a big part of that,” said trustee Terry Bunn of Tuscaloosa during discussion of the projects in September.

During a meeting of the university’s facilities committee, UWA President Richard Holland said that the bond issue for the project had been finalized Monday and the university had been given an A2 credit rating from Moody’s, which signifies a low credit risk.

“They will be visiting campus next year and they’ll want to see us improve in two areas,” Holland said. “The first is campus enrollment. We’re actually searching for a new director in that area and they are very interested in our online program and how we plan to maintain that in the future.”

James Adams, senior project manager for Hoar Construction, said the renovation of Hoover Apartments is about 20 percent complete.

“We’re pouring slab right now, and we were hoping that you all would be able to see a bit of wood up at the site, but we’re still about two days away from that,” Adams said.

He said the renovation is on course to meet the project’s

\$4.4 million budget and is also on schedule to open by Aug. 1.

Hours before a groundbreaking ceremony for Gilbert Hall was held Wednesday afternoon, Hoar's director of pre-construction Greg Ellis laid out the project's schedule.

Ellis said the project is undergoing budget verification, where he and his team comb through the project's costs to ensure that it will meet its budget.

Later this month, Ellis plans to submit the proper construction paperwork to the state and by March plans to begin accepting bids from contractors.

"We should be sending notice to a contractor to proceed with construction by March of next year," Ellis said.

Gilbert Hall is scheduled to be completed in August 2012. Each room will house two beds and have a bathroom. The dorm is planned to be about 116,000 square feet and four stories tall.

Once the two projects are completed, UWA will have 990 student beds.

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