

STANDARD VIII

PHYSICAL RESOURCES

Description

The 34-acre Midtown campus, the University's original campus, currently has four classroom buildings, a student center, three residence halls, the Ruth A. Haas Library, an administrative building, Alumni Hall (with offices, a child care center, and meeting space), seven parking lots, and a parking garage. The University acquired the armory in downtown Danbury in 1990. The Westside campus is a 364-acre site, with a classroom building, two residence halls, the Charles Ives Center for the Arts (a 40-acre outdoor amphitheater), the William A. O'Neill Athletic and Convocation Center, an observatory, tennis courts and athletic fields, and the 33-acre Westside nature preserve. Shuttle buses run on a regular schedule between the Midtown and Westside Campuses, seven days a week. There is also shuttle service to a local motor inn where 202 students are living. WestConn offers bachelor degree completion programs in nursing and management in Waterbury on the campus of Naugatuck Valley Community College. WestConn at Waterbury also offers general education and elective classes as needed so that nursing and management students can fulfill their degree requirements; classes in response to community needs (e.g., graduate Education and English) are occasionally offered as well.

At WestConn, the master planning process works from the bottom up. First, a facility database is created; in the next stage, academic programming is reviewed (Does an existing program need new space? Is there a new program? What kinds of space does it require?) In the final stage, architects design the facility. Plans are put on reserve in the library, and meetings are set up with department chairs and appropriate faculty to discuss the plans.

Over the last ten years, the State of Connecticut has invested more than \$250 million in new facilities and improvements to every building on the Midtown and Westside sites, as well as WestConn's space in Waterbury. The enhancements have all been planned to benefit the growing population of students, faculty, and staff. While there has been a significant expansion of building space, there is also concern for aesthetics and green space: On the Midtown Campus, a quadrangle has been created where there was once a street and a parking lot, trees have been planted, and brick walkways that complement the traditional architecture of the buildings have been added. The area is well lighted, and benches and tables have been placed along the walkways. A project to replace all of the underground steam lines, domestic water lines, and storm water lines made it possible to construct the Quad and walkways throughout the Midtown Campus. Code Blue Student Safety phones have been installed on both the Midtown and Westside campuses, and the University has begun to implement a one-card campus access system. A new phone system was installed eight years ago, supporting voice and data communication on both campuses, and the Midtown Campus now has a new electrical distribution system (double-feed) so that electrical outages will be only momentary. All of the buildings on the Midtown Campus have been re-roofed.

New Construction (1992-2002):

- Pinney Hall (Westside Campus; completed in 1999), a \$22 million, 425 bed suite-style residence hall
- Warner Hall (Midtown Campus): 30,000 square foot facility constructed as a temporary “swing space,” while Haas Library was being renovated (please see below)
- A three-level, 900-car, handicapped-accessible parking garage on White Street (Midtown Campus)
- A covered skywalk across White Street (Midtown Campus) to facilitate accessibility and to provide a safe, weather-proof walkway from the parking lot to classroom and office buildings
- Observatory (Westside Campus): Construction is underway on a 5,000 square foot addition to the observatory. The \$500,000 new facility will house a planetarium, classrooms, faculty offices, and a data room.
- A new multi-sport stadium and concession stand are under construction on the Westside campus and will be ready in the Fall of 2003.

Renovations and Expansion:

Midtown Campus:

- Student Center: The existing Student Center was renovated and expanded (1998) to serve the needs of a growing and increasingly diverse student population. The Center, which doubled in size, houses an auditorium, a new bookstore, new snack bar, commuter lounges, meeting rooms, club offices, an interfaith office, and student life administrative offices.
- Ruth A. Haas Library (completed in 2000): The library was renovated and expanded, doubling the size of the facility. (For additional information, please see Standard Seven.)
- Old Main: Extensive renovations, to be completed in 2004, will convert the oldest building on campus into a modern, efficient one-stop center for student-focused administrative services (e.g., Student Affairs, Registrar, Admissions and Financial Aid, Minority Affairs, and Disability Services).
- Warner Hall (“swing space,” above): Warner Hall has been refitted with technology-equipped classrooms, seminar rooms, an archeology laboratory, and office space for academic clusters designed to facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration and cooperation. The offices of the Dean of Arts and Sciences and the Dean of Graduate and External Programs are also located in Warner Hall.
- University Hall: University Hall, purchased in 1999, was completely refitted in 2000 as an administrative office building with over 20,000 square feet of office space for University management. The building also has a video-conferencing room.
- White Hall: One of the most heavily used buildings on the Midtown Campus, White Hall has a recently renovated 600-seat auditorium. The building now has a number of technology-equipped classrooms, a comprehensive photography laboratory area with a state of the art heat recovery exhaust system, modernized elevators that make the building fully accessible, three Media Center studios, including one that is used as a public access TV studio, art studios, a ceramics lab, and renovated restrooms. Air conditioning was added in many areas.
- Higgins/Higgins Annex (Science Building): In Higgins Hall and Annex, a hazardous materials room and fume hoods have been added, there is a new chemistry laboratory, and the auditorium/lecture facility (Room 114) has been equipped with projection equipment and a smart lectern. Higgins Annex is air-conditioned.
- Berkshire Hall (classroom/faculty office building): A modern, electronically equipped studio space was created on the lower level as a Communications and Theatre Arts laboratory. An addition to the building, with an elevator for accessibility, provides faculty offices and a

gathering space for people to sit and talk or study. The seating in the auditorium was reupholstered, and new ceilings and lights have been added in the gymnasium.

- Alumni Hall: Formerly St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church, Alumni Hall is a 6,000 sq. ft. building with meeting space, offices, and the WCSU Child Care Center, opened in September 1997, which offers an accredited and licensed program for children ages 3 through 5.
- Litchfield and Newbury Halls on the Midtown Campus, and Ella Grasso Hall on the Westside Campus, have been renovated over the past seven years, and all are now fully accessible. Student rooms, bathrooms, and lounge areas have all been refurbished.

Westside Campus:

- O'Neill Center: A Hall of Fame room in the O'Neill Center has been added to honor WestConn athletes.
- Westside Nature Preserve: The preserve has been expanded and improvements made, such as new signage and boardwalks, to provide better public access and to encourage wider community use.
- Westside Classroom Building: A bookstore has been added to the Westside Classroom Building. An addition to the building houses Westside University Computing offices. The President's Meeting Room and the Robert S. Young Library have been renovated, many of the classrooms are now equipped with technology, a videoconferencing room has been built, there is a new air conditioning system, and the building's roof was replaced.
- WestConn at Waterbury: Over \$600,000 of state funds have been spent to renovate existing space on the Naugatuck Valley Community College campus for use by WestConn and Central Connecticut State University. The site now has technology-equipped classrooms, a nursing laboratory, and administrative office space.
- Athletic Facilities: Ten years ago, there was one athletic field on the Westside Campus. Now there are three practice/soccer fields, a men's baseball stadium, a women's softball facility (all of which are lighted), six cushioned tennis courts, and a new athletic stadium.

Appraisal

The growth of Western Connecticut State University's physical resources over the past 10 years has been extraordinary.

Students, faculty, and staff on the Midtown Campus, in particular, temporarily experienced inconveniences and frustrations but then the rewards of an aggressive building and renovation program. The completion of the Haas Library project has meant that Warner Hall could be refitted with classrooms and faculty and administrative office space. A number of faculty members whose offices have been in the basement of White Hall moved to Warner Hall in January 2003.

There are significant costs associated with having two campuses, but the uses of each have become more focused, with the Westside Campus increasingly used for graduate and professional programs, and for athletics. Currently, there are only two Arts and Sciences departments on the Westside Campus: Mathematics and Computer Science (these departments will move to the Midtown Campus when space becomes available).

At present (Fall 2002), the Art Department's M.F.A. students are using temporary space in Warner Hall for their studios, a less than ideal situation that will be resolved with the opening of the Westside Center for the Fine and Performing Arts.

For the past two years, because of a shortage of residence hall rooms, approximately 200 students have been housed at a local motor inn. A full-time Student Affairs staff member has been on site. For the most part, the arrangement has worked well.

Currently, the only food service on the Westside Campus is a snack bar located in the classroom building. The suite-style rooms in Pinney Hall, however, are equipped with kitchens and a Westside student center is planned.

As the number of students with cars has increased, concerns about inadequate parking, particularly on the Midtown Campus, have been raised by a number of faculty, staff, and students.

Projection

Facilities planning consultants were brought to campus in late Fall 2002, and the revision of the facilities master plan has begun. The process typically takes one year. Faculty, staff, and students will be involved in the academic programming portion.

Ground was broken for a new 122,000 square foot science building (50% larger than existing science facility, Higgins Hall) in Fall 2002. The building, which will cost approximately \$49 million, is being constructed on the site of the Midtown Campus football field (the new field is being built on the Westside Campus) and should be completed in Summer 2004. The new facility will be a significant improvement over the current space in terms of classrooms, laboratories (teaching and research labs), equipment, and faculty offices. Planning for the building and for equipment has also served as an occasion for faculty to begin to create a new vision for the sciences at WestConn.

The University has retained an architect to design its new Westside campus center. This will be a 50,000 square foot, \$13 million building, used for food services, student meetings, clubs, etc.

The University will hire an architect in Spring 2003 to plan a new fine and performing arts building on the Westside Campus. This building will consolidate WestConn's music, art, and theater undergraduate and graduate programs.

The City of Danbury will build a magnet school on property that until recently was part of the Westside campus.

A number of construction and renovation projects, scheduled to begin within the next few years, will serve to alleviate many of the space problems the University has experienced recently as the student population grew, programs were introduced and expanded, and the numbers of faculty and staff increased. White Hall is scheduled for \$11 million in renovations, beginning in 2005. Renovations are planned for Higgins Hall and Berkshire Hall. The University will begin a \$19 million renovation of the Westside classroom building in 2006 or 2007, and an architect will be hired to develop plans for an \$8M addition to the O'Neill Center. In 2002, WestConn at Waterbury received a \$250,000 appropriation from the state for renovations and new technology. In late 2003, construction will begin on a 350-bed residence hall on the Westside Campus. In late 2003 or early 2004, a 600-car five-tier parking garage will be constructed on the Midtown Campus; additional parking will be provided on the Westside Campus, as well.

Although the State of Connecticut is currently experiencing financial stress, WestConn expects to continue to have the support of the legislature and the governor to build and maintain facilities that promote the Mission, Principles, and Values of the University.