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ECC Purchases Rolla USGS Building; State Funds to Fuel Renovations

East Central College Thursday announced the acquisition of a building in Rolla, providing the opportunity for the college to consolidate its operations into a single facility.

State funds specifically appropriated for the project were used for the purchase.

College officials said a single, comprehensive facility will better serve students and enable ECC to grow its programs and services.

ECC purchased the building that now houses the United States Geological Survey operations in Rolla. The purchase price was \$5.1 million. The 107,000 square-foot facility is located at 1400 Independence in Rolla.

The USGS has operated in the building since 1974. The agency will continue to operate in the facility at least until February 2025 through its current lease. That may be extended, as ECC begins work to design the renovation of the facility for use as a community college.

“This is a momentous and historic time for East Central College and the Phelps County region,” said Dr. Jon Bauer, ECC president. “Rolla is a key strategic priority for us to greatly enhance educational opportunities throughout the ECC service region. Our mission is to better the lives of our community members through education, and this is a big step forward to accomplishing that goal.”

ECC, a comprehensive community college based in Union, has operated in Rolla since 1995 and currently operates in two facilities. The college leases space from the Rolla Public Schools at the Rolla Technical Center and leases a building located at 2303 North Bishop Road. The College will move out of the two spaces once its newly acquired facility is fully renovated.

The engineering firm Cochran, based in Union, was utilized to assess the building for renovation and construction costs. A preliminary schedule calls for renovations to begin in mid-2025 and

for the facility to open to students in 2027. Mike Woessner of Investment Realty was the agent on the transaction.

State and federal funding approved for the project includes \$13 million from the State of Missouri and \$3 million earmarked by Congress through the Department of Health and Human Services. The upcoming state budget includes an additional \$3.5 million in state funds through the MO Excels program for a Center for Advanced Manufacturing. The FY25 state budget awaits the Governor's signature.

The state and federal funding ECC has received for the Rolla facility can only be used for this project. Additional funding through grants, foundations and other sources will be pursued.

Bauer expressed gratitude for the support from former Sen. Roy Blunt, who sponsored the federal earmark for this project, and from Gov. Mike Parson and the legislature for the state funds.

The Rolla region is part of the college's state-designated service region, but outside of its taxing district.

"No local property tax funds will be used for designing and renovating the facility," added Bauer. "Securing state and federal funding for this project made it possible."

Students living outside of the ECC taxing district pay a higher rate of tuition than those living inside the college taxing district, because those students do not pay local property taxes to support the college. Much of the state's land mass is located outside one of Missouri's 12 community college districts. Service regions enable the community colleges to serve those areas and recoup costs through higher tuition.

One facility provides East Central with the ability to better serve students and the Phelps County area.

"Our facilities have served us well to this point, but there are challenges. Students find themselves driving between the facilities to attend classes. That limits options for scheduling, and it means they may not be in a building where other services are available," said Bauer. "One permanent facility provides an accommodating class schedule, enhanced student and academic services, and the ability to grow programs to serve area business and industry."

Once renovations to the building are complete, the facility will house ECC Rolla's current academic programs and student services, a new advanced manufacturing center, and space for Certified Nurse Assistant, Certified Medical Technician, and GED programs.

Bauer said the facility also provides ample space for strategic partners such as colleges offering complementary bachelor's degree completion programs, service providers, and others.

“Our vision is for the building to serve the needs of the region in a comprehensive fashion, primarily through the programs and services offered by East Central, but also by those offered by partners who would like to operate in the building,” Bauer said.

More information about program and service offerings at ECC Rolla is available at www.eastcentral.edu/Rolla.