

Mercer to Construct Science and Engineering Building

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MACON -- Mercer University will soon break ground on its Macon campus for a new state-of-the-art science and engineering building that will enhance its educational partnership with the Warner Robins Air Logistics Center in Warner Robins.

The largest industrial complex in the state with 13,000 civilian employees and over 5,000 military members, Robins Air Force Base is critical to the economic vitality of central Georgia. One of the primary reasons Mercer is constructing the Science and Engineering Building is its longstanding partnership with the U.S. Air Force at Robins AFB.

"Mercer is addressing the shortage of skilled engineers in Georgia," said University President and CEO R. Kirby Godsey. "The University is graduating the engineers that are needed to support the aerospace industry in middle Georgia, specifically the Warner Robins Air Logistics Center."

Construction of the new facility coincides with the 20th anniversary of the Mercer School of Engineering. To be located next to the Mercer School of Medicine, the facility will feature new laboratories, specialized classrooms, a materials-testing system, study rooms and a 150-seat auditorium. With construction, equipment and furnishings, the Science and Engineering Building is expected to cost \$14 million.

Students from Mercer's nine undergraduate and graduate engineering programs, as well as the core sciences, such as physics, will study in the new facility. One of the new labs will allow faculty and students to develop curriculum designed to work with instruction software modules for students, a project partly funded by a recent Keck Foundation award.

Other labs in the facility will include equipment and devices for students to study basic mechanical, electrical, electromagnetic, solid state, optical and nonlinear phenomena; digital and analog solid state electronic devices; the design and fabrication of devices with imbedded microprocessors; digital signal processing; and composite materials.

The construction of the Science and Engineering Building comes on the heels of the new \$40 million University Center, which was completed in 2004. Both buildings are part of the University's plan for major capital improvements to its Macon campus.

The Science and Engineering Building will allow the University to focus on the teaching of short courses and graduate education, two areas of the greatest need for the Air Logistics Center.

"Our laboratory capacity will be increased, and we will have a greater focus on typical areas important to Robins Air Force Base," said Dr. M. Dayne Aldridge, dean of the Mercer School of Engineering. "The building will include small rooms for student design and research projects that are presently not available."

During the most recently completed fiscal year, about 40 percent of the new engineers hired by Robins AFB came from Mercer School of Engineering, making it the number one provider of engineers to the base. Understanding the value that Mercer provides to the base, President Godsey and Maj. Gen. Michael A. Collings, Commander of the Air Logistics Center, in June 2004 expanded their joint venture, called the Education Partnership Agreement. The agreement provides the Air Logistics Center with extra assistance and a new perspective in research and development areas of interest to its work. It also

provides Mercer students, faculty and staff with access to resources, such as unique, state-of-the-art equipment and expert knowledge, along with the opportunity to work on practical problems of the Department of Defense and the aerospace industry.

The Mercer University School of Engineering serves 500 undergraduate and 100 graduate students, and offers programs in biomedical, computer, electrical, environmental, industrial, mechanical and software engineering; engineering and industrial management; and technical communication.

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