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Metro

Harvard announces plans for new campus center

By **Matt Rocheleau** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT NOVEMBER 15, 2013

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Harvard University officials on Thursday announced plans to build a long-awaited campus center that will open in 2018 and be named after a couple who recently gave an undisclosed but “significant” amount of money toward the project.

The Richard A. and Susan F. Smith Campus Center will become part of the project to renovate and remodel the Holyoke Center, a five-decades-old, 10-story, 360,000-square-foot building on Harvard’s main campus in Cambridge, university officials said Thursday.

“The Smith Campus Center will draw members of the university community together and serve as an important common space for everyone to enjoy and use,” said a statement from university president

Drew Faust.

The project will be designed by London-based Hopkins Architects. After a planning process, construction is expected to start in 2016 and take about two years. University officials declined to say how much the project is expected to cost.

While Harvard does have some common spaces and activity centers around its Cambridge campus, there is not an indoor, central gathering space for the entire university community, officials said.

The university said the new campus center will be a major part of an ongoing, multiyear effort at Harvard to create more common spaces and improve existing ones across campus.

That effort, dubbed the “Common Spaces” program, began in 2009 with the addition of seating, scheduled performances, and new food options in Harvard Yard and in the small plaza in front of Dudley House, campus officials said.

The program also recently led to the transformation of the Plaza and the opening of Memorial Church’s “porch” in Tercentenary Theatre.

University officials said they expect that the new campus center will feature “large, flexible indoor gathering space” for students, faculty, and staff. The building will include food service, lounge, and study areas, along with space for exhibitions, events, and performances.

Officials said they expect the first floor will remain open to the public, offering retail and food service options.

Donations for the project have come as part of a multiyear, \$6.5-billion fund-raising campaign called The Harvard Campaign, which was announced last spring and formally launched in late September, officials said.

The project’s key supporters, Richard and Susan Smith, have previously donated to Harvard and its affiliated institutions, including the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, officials said.

Richard Smith, former chairman and chief executive of Harcourt General Inc., is a member of Harvard’s class of 1946, though he graduated in 1944 because of World War II, the university said.

He also served on both of Harvard's governing boards, including three years as an overseer and nine years as a member of the Harvard Corporation, from which he stepped down in 2000, a year before the university gave him an honorary degree, campus officials said.

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