University of Scranton breaks ground on rehabilitation center
BY SARAH HOFIUS HALL (STAFF WRITER)  Published: November 15, 2013

In the University of Scranton's center for rehabilitation education, students will prepare for their careers while learning to serve others with compassion, officials said at the building's ceremonial groundbreaking Thursday.

The eight-story, $47.5 million center at Jefferson Avenue and Linden Street will hold the departments of physical therapy, occupational therapy and exercise science.

"Through our new center, we will build on areas of great excellence as we prepare Jesuit-educated women and men for their helping professions that are in high demand," university President the Rev. Kevin P. Quinn, S.J., said before blessing the site with holy water.

The project once had an uncertain future, with variance denials from Scranton's zoning board and an initial denial from city council for tearing down Leahy Hall. On Thursday, with legal hurdles cleared and Leahy Hall razed, officials projected completion in summer 2015.

The center for bachelor's, master's and doctoral programs will enable students and faculty to be more competitive in their research and will ensure that students are ready to be leaders, said Debra Pellegrino, Ed.D., dean of the university's Panuska College of Professional Studies.

Included in the center are 25 laboratories, including three for pediatrics, and an assisted daily living simulated neighborhood with an apartment, garage, grocery and street, and simulated hospital patient rooms. A human physiology laboratory will integrate the latest technologies.

Part of the razed Leahy Hall was once the YWCA, and the building's portico was saved and will be placed on the new building. An area of the first floor of the center will highlight the history of the YWCA. Made of limestone, native stone and glass, the building will include a green roof and patio and be built in accordance with Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design standards.

Senior Shannon Gilman plans to graduate with a degree in exercise science in the spring and then continue at the university to become a physical therapist.

"I am so excited to be able to use this building once it's complete," she said, "because I know it will give me that extra push toward making me the best physical therapist I can be."

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