New Lied Center is Vehicle for Broadening CU’s Image

Michelle DeWitt
Managing Editor

Arts & Sciences Junior Albert Marmolejo is from Midland, Texas. When people ask why he came to Creighton, his answer reflects what students have been saying for decades.

“I came to Creighton because of the pharmacy school’s reputation,” Marmolejo said.

He is not alone. In 1995 approximately 25 percent of the freshman class said they were planning to enter a health sciences field. Laurie Vinduska, director of Admissions, said that number does not include students who declared another major, such as biology, but plan to enter the health sciences.

But university administrators are no longer satisfied with such a limited reputation. They want to broaden Creighton’s image, and the new Lied Education Center for the Arts is their primary vehicle for doing so.

“It’s graphic evidence of the university’s commitment in an area far afield from the health sciences,” said Dr. Charles J. Dougherty, vice-president of academic affairs. He said that Creighton has always had strong fine and performing arts programs, but the department has struggled for years with barely-adequate resources.

“Now we have a first-rate building to go with a first-rate program,” said Dougherty.

That building will be a tool used in the admissions process as well. A direct mailing will go out this year to students specifically interested in the arts. It will feature the new building.

A breakfast was held in February for area high school guidance counselors to showcase the building. The counselors were led on a tour which will hopefully encourage them to direct students to Creighton.

“We’ve always had a quality program, but now we can prove it with the building,” said Laurie Vinduska, director of admissions. She said that Creighton, an adjunct faculty member in fine and performing arts, has been associated with Creighton since he graduated from the university in 1978.

“Even at that time, it was a hot issue — making the image more than pre-health sciences,” McCandless said. He said that over the years he has seen the administration’s commitment to broadening the image of the university grow — particularly with the new building.

“The university administration is totally committed to this project,” McCandless said. Now that the department has moved into the building, the second phase of the project will be developing scholarships and showing students that majoring in a fine and performing arts area is a viable option.

Creighton’s commitment to well-roundedness is also visible in the $4.5 million renovation of the Epbley Business Administration Building this summer. The renovation, which will include upgrading technology in the College of Business Administration (COBA), is also part of the Creighton 2000 plan.

Joyce Buenger, assistant to the dean of the College of Business Administration, said there are two initiatives that show Creighton’s commitment to COBA — the remodeling project and the development of the information and management program, including the recently-announced master’s degree in information technology.

Like Vinduska and McCandless, Buenger thinks that this project will help draw students to Creighton.

“I’ve got to think that when we bring tours through here that it’s going to make a world of difference,” Buenger said.

The issue of broadening Creighton’s image is one of the topics at Admissions’ two-day planning meeting in May.

“[Health sciences] is certainly a strength of ours. We can’t lose that part. Our goal is to try to broaden the image,” Vinduska said.

Seeking funds to broaden that image is the responsibility of the Development office at Creighton. Kathy Dombrowski, director of Development Communications, said the university does seek funds for programs that would improve the image of the school and educational opportunities for students.

She said the office tries to make sure that “other needs on campus are addressed, beyond the medical school.”