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South Louisiana Community College shows off its new health and sciences building

BY KAILEY BROUSSARD | Special to The Advocate

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South Louisiana Community College on Thursday officially opened its new health and sciences building, which will serve both as a gateway to the Lafayette campus and as a path to enhanced high school and collegiate education.

Representatives from SLCC as well as the companies that donated \$2.1 million for the \$17.1 million facility stood behind the ceremonial ribbon in front of the building that state Rep. Paul Coussan called the “crown jewel” of District 45 and Lafayette before 75 people attending the ceremony.

“I can look almost any person in the eye and understand the contribution that you’ve made to our college and our students,” said Natalie Harder, chancellor of SLCC, “and it’s just so heart-warming.” The building, with a brick-and-steel exterior highlighted by artwork portraying strands of DNA stationed behind the college’s letters, features a gray-blue interior with the same DNA artwork accenting plaques and monuments inside.

The three-story, 63,000-square-foot building at the corner of Bertrand Drive and Devalcourt Road building also boasts an auditorium that can accommodate 250 people, computer labs and a virtual hospital. Also containing both wet and dry science labs, the building also provides room for STEM – science, technology, engineering and math – courses.

The school will provide career opportunities for “thousands of people,” said Monty Sullivan, president of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System.

“It’s not about the building; it’s about the people,” he said.

“... We’re really excited for this nursing building, especially the nursing students and science majors,” said AdriAnna Hutchens, a student representative for SLCC.

Classes began Jan. 9. With room for up to 1,000 students, the building provides room for the Early College Academy, a dual enrollment high school program, to expand. The building also frees up more space for programs such as the Center for Minority Excellence.

The school commons area is dedicated to Brett Mellington, LEDA's manager of business development and an advocate for higher education.

Also, a time capsule project including items such as a USB drive from Lafayette Parish School System, a thermometer from Women's and Children's Hospital and a stethoscope from Our Lady of Lourdes will be buried at the site. The capsule is scheduled to be opened in 2067.

Donors to this project included Lafayette Parish School Board, Cox Communications, Lafayette Public Trust Financing Authority, Louisiana Economic Development Agency, city-parish government, Midsouth Bank, Whitney Bank, Sleep Management and an anonymous donor.

The health and sciences building opening comes just a few months after the September completion of the SLCC's Evangeline campus in St. Martinville.

“Everything we’ve built, we have built too small,” said Vincent St. Blanc, a member of the LCTCS Board of Supervisors. “We’re the fastest-growing community and technical college system in the country.”