

COASTAL STUDIES

INSTITUTE SEEKS TO BE BOAST OF COAST IN ECOLOGY

green features

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By Catherine Kozak
The Virginian-Pilot

ROANOKE ISLAND

When the new campus of the University of North Carolina Coastal Studies Institute is built, it will be one of the few certified state projects made with environmentally sustainable, efficient and low-impact technology, down to reduced light pollution and use of native landscaping.

That is, it will practice what it preaches.

"We've always wanted to build green," said UNC Coastal Studies Institute director Nancy White.

But with strict Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards for green building adding about \$350,000 to the project costs,

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she said, there was some consideration of just using green materials and techniques, without seeking certification.

In the end, White said, it was agreed that it was important to construct a green building by the book.

"We wanted people to know that we did all the things we were supposed to do, that we did everything in a truly integrated fashion," she said. "It looks like we're going to be able to achieve a gold standard, which is the second-best."

Green features will include on-site control of all of its storm water with techniques such as rain gardens and cisterns; on-site renewable energy; bicycle storage and changing rooms; reduction of pavement; a compact building design that minimizes the footprint; and use of

native plants, grasses and trees, including beach plums, on the campus grounds. White said that as much locally recycled building material as possible will be used in construction.

Now that the design phase is nearly completed, the construction documentation will be prepared for review. If all goes as planned, White said, construction of the \$32.4 million project will start in the summer, and it will be completed in about two years.

Situated on 34.4 acres neighboring the North Carolina Aquarium on Roanoke Island and the Dare County Regional Airport - the land was donated by Dare County - the 92,088-square-foot campus complex will have eight buildings in the residential area. Included will be two bunkhouses for 24 people, two dormitories for 20 people, two staff suites for 12

people, one faculty apartment that could house the small family of a visiting scientist, and a common facility for eating, laundry and meetings.

Housing will be limited to visiting faculty and students, White said.

The research and education buildings will each have an auditorium, classrooms and research and teaching laboratories for on-site and distance learning. There will also be field research plots on the site for students and scientists to conduct tests in a coastal setting.

White said that there will be four program areas: coastal processes, maritime studies, ocean observation and environmental sustainability.

Hiring will include 15 administrative and technical staff before the opening, growing to 30 when the campus is opened, she said. There will also be 20 to 25 faculty in-house.

In 1994, a UNC task force identified the need for a marine research and education facility in northeastern North Carolina. The Coastal Studies Institute will collaborate with existing marine science facilities in Morehead City and Wilmington, but it will operate as a free-standing unit within the university system.

Projects that the institute has conducted so far include research into the ecosystem dynamics at Lake Mattamuskeet and study of the recovery of a filled inlet beach after Hurricane Isabel in 2003. The Coastal Studies Institute has worked out of an office in downtown Manteo since 2003. It also opened a laboratory in Nags Head two years later.

Students who attend a North Carolina university or college could apply to enroll at the institute for a semester or two, or do a field trip to the campus, White said.

Research projects could be specific to the Outer Banks, or coordinated with other coastwide projects, ranging from fisheries to coastal restoration to nautical archaeology.

"Most classes will be an elective with a focus on coastal issues," White said. "Graduate students could be out here for a year or two."

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