Maraist Hall construction to provide new tech, resources; fall completion expected

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Thanks to an alumnus' donation, the University of Louisiana at Lafayette’s F.G. Mouton Hall is undergoing construction of a new lab, the Maraist Financial Services Lab, which will be part of the Moody College of Business.

"The Maraist Financial Services Lab will provide hands on training in financial analysis, portfolio management and stock trading," said J. Bret Becton, dean for the Moody College of Business.

"It will provide students and faculty with access to technology that is state-of-the-art to financial services," he added.

With construction underway, Becton believes they should be open by the beginning of the Fall 2018 semester.

Students may have noticed the construction through chain link fences, as the Maraist lab faces the quad with an exterior semi-circle of glass windows.

Michael P. Maraist, a Lafayette businessman and alumnus of then-University of Southwestern Louisiana, donated $2.5 million to cover the construction costs of the lab.

Maraist was interested in becoming a part of UL Lafayette's already proposed financial lab construction, Becton said. There were also a handful of other donors, and while money is being raised to continue upkeep on the amenities offered within the lab, construction funds are secured.

Becton reported the added area is a 1,000-square-foot addition to F.G. Mouton, tacked onto the area where the student lounge exits, but it "will continue to be a place for students to gather and study."

Among the added amenities, Becton said there would be 24 Bloomberg terminals to give business students real-time financial data, including, but not limited to, financial market data, security values, stock tickers, foreign exchange market data, historical data for publicly traded equity shares, analysis for investment in stocks and fixed income securities.

"We'll also have a real time stock ticker that will be both visible from the inside of the lab and also the exterior," Becton said.

Courses have not been developed for the lab yet, but Becton said the Moody College of Business Administration will do so when construction is complete.

One class that will benefit, Becton added, is a portfolio management class that does research on stock the UL Lafayette Foundation manages or intends to purchase. He added the class already exists, but the lab can potentially be an observational learning experience.

Students will be advised by faculty and will carry out the process of purchasing and managing stocks from start to finish.

"We'll have an advisory board for this lab," Becton said, "and they will have an opportunity to input on how the lab may be upgraded over time. They will be good candidates to be invited speakers to interact with students and faculty."

Will Heath, head of the Department of Economics and Finance, was not available for interview.