



Home / News

[http://www.bgdailynews.com/news/college-heights-foundation-moves-ahead-with-new-building-plans/article\\_bf3c7c69-6b30-52aa-858b-74953dd3e89c.html](http://www.bgdailynews.com/news/college-heights-foundation-moves-ahead-with-new-building-plans/article_bf3c7c69-6b30-52aa-858b-74953dd3e89c.html)

## College Heights Foundation moves ahead with new building plans

By AARON MUDD [amudd@bgdailynews.com](mailto:amudd@bgdailynews.com) May 12, 2018

The College Heights Foundation at Western Kentucky University is ready to move ahead with plans to demolish its aging 1960s-era building and replace it with a newer, more accessible facility.

At its meeting Friday, WKU's Board of Regents authorized a land lease to the foundation at the rate of \$1 per year for a 99-year term.

The foundation, which mainly exists to administer scholarships for students, is designing a new building after a lead gift from Cliff Todd, a 1950 WKU graduate and former epidemiologist and private prison executive.

"We're looking at a place that's going to lead us into our second centennial," said College Heights Foundation President Donald Smith, referring to the foundation's 95-year history.

Smith said that, after considering renovating the building that dates to 1969, it was determined to be more cost-effective to raze the building next to Wetherby Administration Building and build new in its place. The foundation has moved onto the

third floor of the Mahurin Honors College and International Center.

Smith said the new building will have a Georgian architectural style that matches the look of the Kentucky Museum, Gatton Academy and Chandler Memorial Chapel. It will also be more accessible to people with disabilities. The building is inaccessible to people who use wheelchairs.

“It won’t take any institutional dollars,” said Smith, referring to the \$1.7 million that’s been raised so far. The entire project is expected to take about \$2 million and Smith said there are pledges to pay back the difference.

Todd, the project’s principal donor, was an epidemiologist for 17 years before starting the first private prison corporation in the U.S. in 1983, according to the university’s website.

In 1994, Todd pleaded guilty to federal charges connected to a scheme to bribe former Jefferson County corrections chief Richard Frey, according to a previous Daily News article. Todd paid Frey nearly \$200,000 to win an inmate-housing contract for his company, U.S. Corrections Corp. He served six months in prison.

In 1999, a professorship was created in Todd’s name to support a College of Education and Behavioral Services professor and the university’s WellU wellness program.

Smith said the building will be razed in July with groundbreaking on the project in August. Construction is expected to take 12 to 15 months.

A separate project to renovate WKU’s aging Garrett Conference Center has been put on pause, according to Chief Facilities Officer Bryan Russell.



**FORD'S**  
FURNITURE

*Give Yourself A Break!*

APOLLO  
- your choice -  
QUAKE

Hassle Free Price **\$405<sup>53</sup>**

The advertisement features the Ford's Furniture logo at the top left, a decorative floral graphic at the top right, and two brown recliners. The text 'Give Yourself A Break!' is written in a red, cursive font. Below the recliners, the names 'APOLLO' and 'QUAKE' are listed with '- your choice -' in between. At the bottom, the price '\$405<sup>53</sup>' is prominently displayed next to the phrase 'Hassle Free Price'.

In March of 2017, the university entered into a partnership with dining services provider Aramark for a 20-year contract that also required Aramark to help with renovating the center, which dates to 1951.

But Russell said the university wants to take a look at what it can do to revitalize facilities at the top of WKU's hill. He added that there are no plans to remove the Industrial Education Building as part of redesigning facilities at the top of the hill.

During his Investiture Ceremony last month, WKU President Timothy Caboni announced plans to create the WKU Commons, which will draw on the dining services partnership.

He described the scope of the project as creating a broader community space for commuter students to eat, work, study and collaborate and for faculty to meet with students and their peers.

“Instead of simply rebuilding the Garrett Conference Center, we will invest those funds into our campus libraries, creating an intellectual hub that invigorates engagement, stimulates learning and creates a sense of community for the entire WKU family,” he said at the event.

“We will move away from thinking of the library as a book warehouse or materials repository and we will revitalize that space to become a place where ideas are created, shared and shaped,” he said.

## Aaron Mudd

Education reporter. Covers education and related issues, focusing primarily on the Bowling Green and Warren County public school districts and Western Kentucky University.