

CENTRE, from A1

pinch myself about because it is hard to believe it is really ours," Trollinger said.

In 2000, Sutcliffe was aging and difficult to keep cool with throngs of media members and politicians packed in the building. It's proximity to the debate stage was advantageous, but space required both the media filing center and what's known as "spin alley," where political operatives come after the debate to convince the nation their candidate was victorious, to co-exist inside Alumni Gymnasium where the basketball team competes.

The renovation doubled the size of the overall facility to about 80,000 feet and added a multipurpose gym, walking track, classroom space, office suites for coaches, the Buck Fitness Center, racquetball courts and a cafe. A new heating, ventilation and air conditioning system was included.

This year, the media filing center will be located in the 15,000-square-foot Hazelrigg Gym, while Alumni Gym will accommodate spin alley.

Centre had hoped to secure one of the debates during the 2008 election cycle. While the college wasn't chosen, Trollinger said the new digs made a lasting impression when he and some other officials gave a tour for longtime debate producer Marty Slutsky.

"Marty has been doing this a long time and he told us that if he were designing a media filing center that could be used as a gymnasium and student recreation facility when a debate wasn't being held, it would be [Sutcliffe]."

While the many conspicuous additions to the campus have drawn attention, Wayne King and his crew hope they can accomplish the same feat they were praised for in 2000: don't get noticed.

King, the director of facilities, was charged with building an entire temporary air conditioning system for Sutcliffe during the last debate. The job required bringing in two 150-ton chillers to pipe cool air through a building that had to be kept around 65 degrees at all times.

King also was asked to build two sound-proof rooms for the campaigns in the ballroom off Alumni Gym only hours before the 2000 debate.

"It's going to make things a lot easier," King said of Sutcliffe. "Everything in this building is located ideally for what we are doing. You have a nice big space (in Hazelrigg Gym) and now trucks can come to the first floor to load and unload directly."

At King's behest, Sutcliffe and some of the other buildings were constructed with staging big events in mind. There will be no need to add extra power generators to the building for this year's debate because of increased amperage and numerous additional outlets.

Director of Communications Michael Stryck will be in charge of the media center, which is expected



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Work continues at The Eugene Brockman Residential Commons on the campus of Centre College. Below is Crouse Hall.

to serve as a base of operations for many of what will be thousands of credentialed journalists.

Although it is the smallest school to host a debate, Stryck said in Sutcliffe the college now has a complex for hosting media and related activities that rivals many of its larger counterparts. He compared this to the fact that Ole Miss, a large land grant institution, had to host media in tents when they hosted their presidential debate.

The Norton Center has also received some attention, including new windows, seats in Newlin Hall and a fire alarm system that will be in place by the debate. New air conditioning also will help King and his staff with their directive to keep the temperature at 62 degrees exactly, lest one of the candidates repeat Richard Nixon's now infamous flop sweating appearance during the 1960 debate against John F. Kennedy.

"A lot of the infrastructure, you can't look at it or take a picture of it but it is so important to what we have to do," Stryck said.

In 2009, the 50,000-square-foot, \$15-million Campus Center was built, which includes the dining commons and numerous offices. King said the new facility, also about double the size of the previous dining hall, will allow meals to be served to students up until the area has to be restricted for the debate.

It has not yet been determined what function the Campus Center and other campus buildings, new and old, will serve during the event. Stryck and King said decisions about the debate are already being made, and modified, on almost hourly basis.

"Planning is so fluid and it changes daily," Stryck said, echoing the thoughts of King, who along with his team may shuffle the configuration of certain debate-related infrastructure several times a day. "We really need to be flexible, stay nimble and keep a smile on our faces."

Janet Brown has led the Commission on Presidential Debates since its beginnings 25 years ago. She said the new space for the media filing center and other upgrades made a definite impression on a group already familiar and comfortable with the leadership group who were largely intact from the last debate.

According to Brown, initial judgment of campus facilities based on the commission's site selection guidelines is integral to decisions about who receives final consideration.

"It is absolutely the first step," Brown said. "It is so important because of the nature of the broadcast and the number of journalists we have to be able to accommodate."

Officials agree the enthusiasm among students at the time of the last debate was nearly matched by alumni, creating a sense of momentum that has translated into both increased national stature and donations.

Stryck said the ambitious capital plan was only made possible by a successful capital campaign, noting Centre has led the nation in alumni giving over the years with rates generally around 60 percent and reaching as high as 75 percent in the past. That is compared to rates that can be in the single digits for many schools.



Because of direct gifts or general donations to the capital campaign, all of the projects have been paid for.

"People come here knowing they will be given everything they need to be successful and some of those who have been very successful in business in particular know what a good investment is," Stryck said. "There is a lot of loyalty and when you can offer life-changing experiences, like the debate, people want to give back and show support with their pocket books."

Trollinger said the debate and the excitement it created got the school's story to a much wider audience.

"I can't say (the debate) was the difference in out-

of-state applications because we don't have a way to capture that," Trollinger said. "This was our way of signaling to the world that Centre College was ready to play on the national stage. We were able to build our reputation with students across the nation, but also inspire people who went here to step up through their generosity."

The post-debate flourish in capital projects has also included upgrades to academic facilities and construction to prepared for planned growth in the school's enrollment already under way.

A \$21-million renovation of Young Hall in 2010 added 40,000 square feet to the science facility. Pearl Hall, a \$15-million residence hall and the first

such building in Kentucky to earn Gold LEED certification, opened in the fall of 2008. Construction is underway on a \$15 million residential commons project that will add 125 beds, part of an effort to keep the school residential and accommodate some enrollment growth.

The school's current enrollment is 1,306, but the plan is to increase the total student population to around 1,350 by the 2013-14 school year.

"I don't think it would be far off to say the campus has seen a transformation when you look at what has happened (since 2000) with the facilities here," Trollinger said. "What is most important is what those facilities make possible for our students."

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