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## **Doudna Project to Move Ahead; EIU Community Truly Thankful**

*Nov-19-2004*

The students, staff and faculty of Eastern Illinois University found out this week that they have one thing more to be thankful for this holiday season.

The state's Capital Development Board announced plans to begin seeking bids for the long-awaited \$46 million [Doudna Fine Arts Center expansion/renovation project](#). Building specifications are expected to be released sometime within the next two weeks, according to Steve Shrake, design and construction manager at Eastern.

A date of Jan. 4 has tentatively been set as a "walk through" of the building, where interested contractors can tour the now-vacant structure and ask questions of the project architect (Cannon Design of Chicago) and engineer (Henneman, Raufeisen & Associates, Champaign). If all goes as scheduled, bids for mechanical work (i.e., ventilation, electrical, plumbing, heating and the sprinkler system) will be due by Jan. 11, while bids for the general contracting work will be due two days later on Jan. 13.

If that process goes smoothly, the EIU community could see crews beginning work on the building as early as mid-February, Shrake said. The project is expected to take three years to complete.

The project, which will include renovations to the existing fine arts center and the construction of an additional 168,800 square feet of new space, originally had an estimated completion date of Fall 2005. However, the project was stalled due to a lack of available state funding.

Those hardest hit by the delay have been the faculty, staff and students of Eastern's art, music and theatre arts departments who moved to temporary quarters - two of which are located in off-campus leased locations - during the summer of 2002. The fine arts center was left to be gutted and stripped of asbestos in preparation for its renovation, making it impossible for the departments to move back in when release of state funding became delayed.

The university community again became hopeful when, in February 2004, Governor Rod Blagojevich released the money needed to continue the project. "When completed, the state-of-the-art Doudna Fine Arts Center will not only benefit the students and the university, but it will also be a place where the community will participate in the college's arts, theater and music programs," the governor said in an earlier press release.

Unfortunately, a second - albeit shorter -- delay was then necessary while revisions were made to the project's original plans.

More hopeful now that the CDB has announced its plans to move forward, affected faculty, staff and students are looking forward toward the day they can return to their newly renovated home.

"The original fine arts center was built in 1958, with the art wing added in 1959 and theatre in 1972," said Jim Johnson, dean of Eastern's College of Arts and Humanities.

"When completed, the facility will showcase our three fine arts departments in a manner that will be a source of pride both for EIU and the citizens of the state of Illinois," he added.

In addition to administrative and faculty offices and general classrooms, key elements of the new facility will be state-of-the-art computer labs; graphics design drafting labs and studios; well-equipped studio space for metals, printmaking, drawing, painting, sculpture, ceramics and teacher education; new percussion labs; electric piano, music and keyboard labs; a new band, choral and orchestra rehearsal studio; expanded music library and music practice space; renovations to Dvorak Concert Hall; conversion of the main stage theatre to a second recital hall; a new movement studio; expansion of scene and costume shops and related storage space; a new 275-seat proscenium theatre; a studio theatre (black box); and a 150-seat lecture hall.

"The university will have a state-of-the-art facility designed by one of America's leading architects, [Antoine Predock](#), which will allow our three fine arts departments - art, music and theater - to thrive well into the 21 st century," said Jeffrey Lynch, associate dean of the college.