Belfer Research Building Officially Opens

After seven years of fundraising and nearly four years of construction, Weill Cornell Medical College officially opened the Belfer Research Building on Jan. 31.

The 480,000-square-foot building, located at 413 E. 69th St., will be bustling with activity in the next few months as construction crews put on the finishing touches and researchers’ labs are relocated into the space.

Given that activity, Weill Cornell officials have outlined the proper protocol for Weill Cornell faculty, student, staff and visitor access, as well as other operations:

- Faculty, students and staff will have access to the building by presenting their Weill Cornell ID badge to the security personnel or turnstiles in the main lobby. Once inside, they will be able to go to any floor. Entrance to the laboratories will be restricted to those with authorized cards. Lab visitors will have to be escorted inside by lab staff.

- Other visitors to faculty and staff working in the Belfer Research Building will be granted visitor passes at the front security desk, which will allow them to visit the appropriate lab floor. These passes will not permit direct entry into laboratories; faculty or staff will need to escort visitors into those spaces.

- Adjoining the lobby are several seating areas for visitors, a student room and a small food vending area run by the Griffis Faculty Club. These spaces are open to the public.

- The conference rooms on the second and third floors are available for booking through the Events Services Office. The third floor will be subject to construction noise for the next few months. Visitors can access the conference center through the front hall lobby by either taking the stairs or securing an elevator pass from the security desk.

- The Lasdon Terrace, accessible from the second floor of the Belfer Research Building, is being remodeled and will be open for use June 1.

- The main loading dock for Weill Cornell Medical College will eventually move to the Belfer Research Building. Until the new loading dock opens, the existing one at 510 E. 70th Street in the A Building will continue in service.

Weill Cornell’s Education Center to be Upgraded

Construction will begin at the end of the semester to spruce up the 20 classrooms in the education center, located on the second floor of the Sandra and Edward Meyer Research and Education Building and last renovated in 1995.

Each classroom will be outfitted with new infrastructure, including audio-visual, networking and wireless technology, as well as modern tables and chairs that are easily portable for any class size or layout. In addition, crews will add LED lighting and acoustical ceilings, and make general cosmetic upgrades to other areas of the center, including student lockers.

Officials anticipate the project to be completed by the start of the fall semester. To achieve this goal, Weill Cornell will shut down the affected classrooms, as well as the adjacent Weill Auditorium and Archbold Commons for the duration of the project. Summer students can visit the Belfer Research Building’s café, student room, Welcome Lounge and landscaped Lasdon Terrace during this time.

The project is driven by Weill Cornell’s efforts to reform its curriculum, which is currently being piloted and is expected for full rollout in the fall. The new curriculum emphasizes rich classroom discussion in small groups rather than traditional lectures and utilizes podcasts and video-casts as critical educational tools.
New Campus Store, Modern Reading Room Planned for Samuel J. Wood Library

Weill Cornell will get a new campus store and a modernized reading room after construction crews return this summer to the medical college’s Samuel J. Wood Library/C.V. Starr Biomedical Information Center for another round of renovations.

Beginning in June, the medical college will redesign the main reading room, enhance Smart Desk capabilities, construct a campus store and add more work stations and office space for faculty and staff. The project builds off of last year’s renovations, which created a 24-hour study room and a collaboration room equipped with video-conferencing technology.

“The library is a hub for education — one of our key missions at the medical college,” said Dana Kaplan, department administrator for information technologies and services at Weill Cornell. “As we transition away from hard-copy books into a more digital-resource library, it’s important that our services and outward appearance reflect our 21st century needs. This renovation will accomplish just that.”

With the goal of modernizing the library for contemporary education, Weill Cornell will be renovating spaces that haven’t been updated in 30 years, beginning with the main library entrance and reading room.

Crews will remove the stacks behind the circulation desk, utilizing that space for additional Smart Desk technical support akin to Apple’s Genius Bar, Kaplan said. In addition, the furniture in the reading room will be replaced, including tables, chairs and computer workstations, to cultivate a more relaxed and efficient environment. The security gates at the library entrance and exit will also be replaced.

“The library has a major physical presence at Weill Cornell,” Kaplan said. “It’s visible from the street and utilized by our students and affiliates. What we are going to do is create a seamless look for the entire library, so that it’s emblematic of our mission.”

A new campus store will be built in the northwest corner of the library, across from the existing circulation desk. It will feature Cornell University and Weill Cornell Medical College merchandise. This new store is Weill Cornell’s first in two years, when the store in Lasdon House closed.

In addition, underutilized rooms and pantry spaces throughout the first floor of the library will be remodeled as workspaces for faculty and staff.

Construction is expected to be completed in September. Although the library will be open throughout the renovations, an alternate entrance may be used at times.

Weill Cornell Graduate School of Medical Sciences, Medical College Administration Offices to Get Facelift

Construction crews are hard at work this spring to update several administrative offices for the Weill Cornell Graduate School of Medical Sciences.

Nine offices, including those of the graduate school’s dean and associate deans, encompass about 2,000-square-feet of the first floor of the A Building and are getting a modern look. An additional office will be converted into a conference room for graduate school activities.

The renovation, which began last month, will occur in four phases to limit disruption and will include new finishes, furniture and lighting, as well as plumbing, electrical and HVAC improvements.

In addition to the grad school renovation, Capital Planning is also renovating the Office of Academic Affairs, located behind the library in the Meyer Research and Education Building. Construction began in January, which also includes new finishes, furniture and lighting, as well as plumbing, electrical and HVAC improvements.

Officials anticipate both projects will be completed in May.

Radiology Service Upgrade at Weill Greenberg Center to Close Conference Center

Weill Cornell Medical College will spend the next year upgrading radiology services on the third floor of the Weill Greenberg Center to meet increasing patient demand and keep up with technological advances.

The project, which began last month and is expected to be completed in February 2015, will replace an existing CT machine with a PET/CT scanner, replace two existing MRI machines and install a PET/MRI machine. All are radiology services offered by Weill Cornell Imaging at NewYork-Presbyterian.

To accommodate the equipment upgrades, Weill Cornell will renovate the existing radiology suite to compensate for the size and strength of the new magnets. The suite will remain open during construction, and crews will work on one machine at a time to minimize disruption and keep services available to patients.

For the duration of the construction, however, the Selma Ruben Conference Center, which is directly below the work area on the second floor, will be closed. Crews will need direct access to the ceiling to install magnetic and RF shielding.

In addition to work on the third floor, there will be work performed in the basement, where a new package chiller will be installed in the mechanical room to offset the additional chilled water requirements for the new units and for the upgrade of the two existing MRI machines.

The project is needed because imaging equipment has been used to its capacity.