

## Ground officially broken for Fort Lewis College's new student union

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Representatives from the FLC students and administration, along with members of the architects and contractors, throw the ceremonial first shovel full of dirt.

DURANGO, CO - At last, ground has been officially broken for Fort Lewis College's new student union building. FLC faculty, staff and students, as well as community members and media, attended a groundbreaking ceremony on April 17 to commemorate the commencement of work on the union.

"Today we celebrate the groundbreaking for the new student union building," said Fort Lewis College President Dr. Brad Bartel. "It's the largest, most expensive, most dynamic—in my opinion—building project in the close to 100-year history of Fort Lewis College."

"It's also a project that's a long time coming," he added.

The idea for a new student union had been discussed for years. Representatives from the College administration and the student government examined the possibilities for a new building, even traveling to other campuses across the country to view examples of student unions.

In 2006, a course was decided upon and it was the Fort Lewis College students themselves that chose to institute a new student fee to pay for the majority of the cost of constructing a new student union.

"This was something that we were going to have to do on our own or not do at all," former student body president, Brayton Thurber said. Brayton was president in 2006 when the student fee was passed.

"Student participation, collective vision and student funding are what make this building the students'."

Over the past year, the new student union truly took shape as the committee tasked with designing the new student union worked on filling the over 100,000 sq. feet of space the new building would offer.



ASFLC President Aaron Elinoff spoke during the groundbreaking ceremony.

A major part of designing the building was getting student input. Early on, the new student union architects, Perry Dean Rogers, placed pictures of potential design ideas around the existing College Union Building and asked that students write their thoughts on those pictures. In just a few days, the pictures were covered with suggestions.

Far from just a gimmick, the architects took that student input and integrated it as much as possible into the building design plans.

“Finally the ideas we as students dreamed up materialized in a magnificent building, at least on paper,” said current student body president, Aaron Elinoff. “Today, however, those dreams take their greatest step towards becoming a reality. This building truly is a student union by definition and in function from the ground up, both in the concept as well as, as we’ll soon see, in execution.”

Chairman of the Board of Trustees for Fort Lewis College Richard Ballantine echoed in his remarks the vital contributions of the students to the new student union project.

“I think this moment belongs to the College’s student leadership,” he said. “It was really the students who played the major role in designing this building and are largely funding it. It is really their day today, I think.”

When completed, the new, \$37.5 million student union will be the centerpiece of campus. The building plan calls for a 38,000 square foot addition to be built onto the existing College Union Building. This addition, due to be completed in 2010, will house FLC’s expanded food service offerings, including a larger dining room and the Rocket Grille & Pub.

The existing College Union Building will then be completely renovated and house most of the major campus offices and organizations. New facilities will also be created, such as a media center housing [KDUR](#), [the Independent](#), [the Intertribal News](#) and Durango Community Access Television, among others.

In total, the new student union will boast more than 100,000 square feet and a LEED Gold rating for the addition. The LEED ratings refer to how environmentally-friendly a structure is, with gold being the highest rating behind platinum. The College is looking into the possibility of pursuing LEED certification on the renovation project as well.

The focus on green building springs from the American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment that FLC President Brad Bartel signed in 2007.