EAST MISSISSIPPI COMMUNITY COLLEGE BREAKS GROUND FOR STUDENT UNION, FELLOWSHIP HALL

SCOoba – East Mississippi Community College hosted two ground-breaking ceremonies Nov. 18 at its Scooba campus – one for a new Student Union and one for an addition to the Chapel in the Pines.

“We’ve scrimped and saved for a long time. We’ve been conservative stewards of the taxpayers’ money,” said EMCC President Dr. Rick Young.

“Do you ever listen to Dave Ramsey? On his nationally syndicated radio show, he helps people think about how to manage their money wisely. He’s all about paying down debt and saving for the future. Ramsey likes to say, ‘If you’ll live like no one else now, you can live like no one else later.’

“EMCC has done a lot with a little over the years, and our ‘later’ has finally arrived. We’re proud to announce that we are moving forward with two much-needed building projects.”

The first ground-breaking at 11 a.m. was for an addition to the Chapel in the Pines, to be called the Buster & Jeanie Orr Center for Christian Activity. The 4,200-square-foot fellowship hall will include a kitchen, office and large multi-purpose meeting area.

“Buster and Jeanie Orr met as students at EMCC. They have always supported the college, with their time and hard work, and they’ve been very generous with financial donations,” said EMCC Director of Development Nick Clark. “It’s fitting that this addition to the Chapel in the Pines should be named in their honor.”

The $400,000 cost of the new wing will be financed through private donations. The architect is Pryor & Morrow of Columbus. The general contractor is Paul Jackson & Sons of Brookhaven. The scheduled completion date is June 2011.

After sharing lunch, the EMCC team and visiting dignitaries moved on to the second ground-breaking of the day, for a Student Union building.

“We’ve needed a Student Union at the Scooba campus for a long time. It will include a feature we’ve never had, a recreational area called ‘The Commons’ for residential students to gather after hours,” Young said. “It will also be a place for commuter students to spend a few minutes before classes, or between classes – right now, they end up waiting in their cars.”

The 36,000-square-foot Student Union will be built just west of John C. Stennis Hall. In addition to The Commons, it will include a new cafeteria, a bookstore/convenience store, a grill for casual dining, offices, conference rooms and an outdoor patio area.

The Student Union will cost about $6.6 million. The architect is Pryor & Morrow of Columbus. The general contractor is Panola Construction Co. of Batesville.

Dr. Paul Miller, vice president of EMCC’s Golden Triangle campus, will help oversee the construction.

“Community colleges get an annual allocation from the state Legislature for capital improvements. We have been stashing ours away for a number of years, not spending any of it,” Miller said.

“It’s taken awhile, but we’ve finally saved enough to ‘match’ those state allocations and build a Student Union. There’s a benefit, also, to building during a down economy. Construction costs per square foot are down, so we will be able to maximize our buying power.”

The scheduled completion date for the Student Union is May 2012.