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Shinn discusses plans, programs with alumni

By Bryan Marshall
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BEREA — From millions of dollars in renovations to educational programs to help students succeed, President Larry Shinn shared updates Saturday about Berea College with alumni.

The town hall meeting in the Trustees Room of Seabury Center was part of the 2007 Berea College homecoming celebration.

Shinn detailed changes the college will be making to Boone Tavern Hotel after the board of trustees recent-

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PRESIDENT LARRY SHINN

ly approved \$9.6 million in renovations.

"We want understated elegance," he said. "We don't need gold fixtures and fancy stuff. But, we want you to walk into that building and feel the texture of nicely done woodwork,

which will happen for the first floor."

Structurally, about half the basement will be taken down about 3 feet, Shinn said.

A laundry room and pub-

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lic restrooms also will be put in the basement and the first floor will be renovated as well to create additional conference space.

A new skylight will be installed, along with an \$800,000 new kitchen.

The second- and third-floor rooms also will be renovated, Shinn said, with the goal of the entire project to reduce energy usage by 30 to 40 percent and operate the facility using clean, recyclable materials.

"The idea is to have very comfortable, but sensible and green space to live in," he said. "The build will be a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) building. It will be our second LEED building on campus. It's a formal designation you can get only after you spend about \$50,000 with a company that says you've met all the requirements and the building operates in an energy-efficient way."

Shinn also discussed the recent renovation of Pearson Hall and upcoming work on the Emery Building and Knapp Hall in 2008 and 2009, respectively.

"When the buildings are complete, the 19 worst buildings that were identified by an engineer in 1996 will have

been renovated," he said.

Shinn also discussed educational programs the college is utilizing to help students while they are at Berea and before they arrive on campus.

"One of the things that we've been working really hard on for the past seven or eight years, but intensifying in the last couple of years, is asking, 'How can we help students who come to Berea be better prepared before they get here?' and secondly, 'How can we assist those who come who have deficiencies or just backgrounds with elements that make it hard to be successful at Berea College?'" he said.

During the 1990s, Berea College began a program with the Rockcastle County School District that provided students with skills that would allow them to continue on to postsecondary education after graduating high school.

The program has grown into the \$17 million, federally funded GEAR UP program that is designed to lift student aspirations, provide math and language skills and work with parents, teachers, schools and other agencies to build a partnership in education, Shinn said. The program now serves more than 4,500 students in Madison, Lee, Estill, Rockcastle and Jackson counties.

"We now have been get-

ting a stream of students who come from the GEAR UP program," Shinn said. "Part of our job then is to not only prepare them for Berea College, but whatever kind of postsecondary education they might join."

A Task Force on Student Success also has explored ways during the past two years to make as many students as possible be successful once they do arrive on Berea's campus, Shinn said.

"In 1996, we continued only 65 percent of the freshman class for their sophomore year," he said. "The last three years, we've continued 82 to 85 percent. We continued only 46 percent of the students in 1996 to graduation. The last three years, the number has been 63 percent of the students moved on to graduation."

The ambitious goal of the Task Force on Student Success is to increase those numbers another 10 percent, Shinn said.

"We're trying to push that we're trying to become a place of true access," he said. "It's not just about dollars, but about capacity, persistence and about continuing on to the completion of a student's education."

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