

Law School News and Events

Regents Renew Request for New Law Building: Outlook Viewed with Guarded Optimism

At their October 1982 meeting, the Iowa Board of Regents agreed to submit a capital improvement asking to the 1983 Iowa Legislature that includes \$24.65 million for a new building for the College of Law. As in 1982, the law building is the top "big ticket" item on the Regents' priority list, standing behind only one other new construction project, a \$7 million speech/arts building at UNI.

Funding for the new law building will again be proposed through the authorization of a special bond issue, a technique used successfully in the last legislative biennium to fund approximately \$58 million in capital improvements on the campuses of Regents institutions. Through such special bonding, progress can be made in the replacement of obsolete physical facilities during hard economic times when current revenues will not permit direct capital appropriations. Besides meeting critical physical facility needs, bonding for academic buildings allows the state to complete projects at today's lower construction costs, using money borrowed well below commercial rates (because the bonds are tax exempt), while creating a large number of jobs in the construction industry and related businesses. In Iowa it is estimated that for every \$1 million of construction cost, 13 people will be employed directly for one year and an equal number of jobs will be created in related manufacturing and service industries.

Preliminary indications from leaders in both the executive and legislative branches suggest that funding for the new law building will be seriously considered in the upcoming legislative session. Understandably, no one is prepared to predict a favorable outcome at this early stage, but a keen awareness exists of the possible linkage between a large construction project like the law building and widespread interest expressed in creating meaningful jobs for out-of-work Iowans, a theme that dominated the recently completed political campaign.

On this front, the law building presents a unique opportunity for rapid action. The site is already cleared and ready to receive construction and the architectural planning will be completed by January 1983 (ready for the bidding process), so an early approval of funding would mean that construction could start as early as March, 1983. It is doubtful that there are many, if any, other state building projects as large as the law school in which ground could be broken so quickly after the commitment of funds.

Strong grassroots efforts led by local community leaders were the key to coming so close to success in the law building campaigns in 1981 and 1982. Undoubtedly it will be true for the upcoming legislative session that the active support of Iowa lawyers and friends of the University throughout the state will be crucial if funding for a new building is to stand a good chance for approval.



View from the top of the Varsity Heights site cleared for the new law building (looking east toward the Main Library).



View from west end of Burlington Street Bridge looking up toward the bluff where the new law building will be built.