

University Center Project Update

Hennessey Hall - Dodge City, KS

November 2019

Progress continues with the University Center project at Hennessey Hall. The bid process has begun for the remodeling of the classroom space on the ground floor at Hennessey Hall that will be funded by the USDA Rural Business Development Grant. On October 29th, there was a pre-bid meeting held at the site for all interested contractors. All bids will be in by November 12th.



Recently, The Rural Education & Workforce Alliance (REWA) was awarded an Arthur and Cornelia Scroggins Foundation Grant on behalf of the Community Foundation of Southwest Kansas. This grant will fund the purchasing of classroom furniture for the University Center. Once the classroom is remodeled, it will be able to seat 50 students for various classes and seminars.

Efforts from REWA have been critical to attracting other educational opportunities. This year, REWA has helped recruit 23 students to the FHSU Bachelors of Social Work Cohort as well as building partnerships with KU Med's Bachelors of Respiratory Therapy, a 2+2 program that is currently hosted at Seward County Community College, to bring the same opportunity to the other community colleges in the region. The Development Corporation has recently started taking applications for the REWA Coordinator position. This position will continue to write grants and continue coalition building efforts to bring higher education opportunities to Southwest Kansas.

The range of classes that will be offered in this space is something Hennessey Hall hasn't seen since the 1990s. Besides the college-level courses that Newman University is currently offering, there is interest from Fort Hays State University's Bachelors of Nursing and Masters of Social Work programs along with workforce-related courses from Kansas State University. In addition to being a landing place for University-level education, the classroom will be able to host seminars and classes that the SBDC offers as well as provide space for other institutions. Previously, some of the SBDC's more popular classes, like Quickbooks and digital marketing classes, have had to split into multiple classes, or even offer limited space. The potential in Hennessey Hall has also attracted interest from other institutions that specialize in criminal justice trainings.

Finally, we are still waiting to hear on the status of the USDA Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant. This grant will fund the costs of technology for the project including IT hardware for the Dodge City location as well as five additional frontier communities.

Working together as a community and region is critical to bringing this project to life, and effectively using it to combat the healthcare problems our region faces.

This project is being made possible through funding in part by the USDA Rural Business Development Grant, the Arthur and Cornelia Scroggins Foundation Fund at the Community Foundation of Southwest Kansas and the Kansas Health Foundation.



For more information about the University Center Project contact the Dodge City/Ford County Development Corporation at 620-227-9501