Construction to begin soon on new tech center at Cabrillo

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APTOS — After being approved last week by the California Division of the State Architect and receiving a donation from the Peggy and Jack Baskin Foundation, construction for Cabrillo College’s all-in-one technology center is slated to begin in October.

The center, which will be named the Jack and Peggy Baskin Technology Center for Engineering, Computing and Physics in honor of the $894,495 donation from the philanthropists, will be housed in the completely-remodeled 800 building located on the Apts campus.

Part of the donation will go towards the building’s remodel along with nearly half of the $4.3 million Science, Technology, Engineering and Math grant Cabrillo received last year from the U.S. Department of Education. Another $2 million in funds will come from Measure D.

The grant is available for community colleges that are designated as Hispanic-Serving Institutions — colleges where Latinos make up at least 25 percent of the student body, said Jo-Ann Panzardi, Cabrillo Engineering department chair and instructor, who helped spearhead the grant process.

Renovating the 20,892-square-foot building, which was built in the early 1960s, will cost more than $4 million, she said. The goal is to finish the remodel in July so the building will be ready for classes in the fall semester.

While the outside will remain the same, the inside of the building will be completely gutted, Panzardi said, in order to construct new classrooms and lab space. A 5,000-square-feet “STEM center” will be located in the building, serving as a gathering place for students to study, be tutored and work on projects.

Offices and departments that were housed in the building were moved to temporary locations around the campus in January, leaving the building vacant.

The building will house Cabrillo’s engineering, engineering technology, computer science, computer information systems and physics departments, as well as the college’s MESA program.

Previously, all of these departments had been located in different buildings around the campus, with only the physics department being located in the 800 building. With the remodel, the centralized nature of it will benefit the students in those programs, Panzardi said.

“It’s a wonderful opportunity for our students to be housed in the same building,” she said.

The grant from the Peggy and Jack Baskin Foundation will also establish and fund the Baskin Girls in Engineering and Technology Summer Program. This program will serve between 25 and 30 Santa Cruz County middle school girls with a week-long summer program that will expose them to engineering and technology through hands-on projects. The program will launch in July.

Additionally, the STEM grant will fund services for students, including a 4-week summer program designed to introduce students to the STEM fields.

“I think this center will be an excellent addition to the curricula at Cabrillo, one that helps students be successful and provides graduate with a very optimistic employment prospect,” Jack Baskin, co-founder of the Peggy and Jack Baskin Foundation, stated in a press release.