

CAMPUS IN SOUTH LAKE IS IN WORKS A COMMUNITY COLLEGE CENTER WILL BREAK GROUND NEXT YEAR. POSSIBLE BUT LESS CERTAIN: A UCF BRANCH.

[CENTRAL FLORIDA Edition]

Orlando Sentinel - Orlando, Fla.

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Date: Nov 29, 1997

Section: OSCEOLA SENTINEL

Text Word Count: 433

Document Text

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A planned community college campus that would serve the Four Corners area is on course toward construction next year, Lake-Sumter Community College officials said.

Officials expect to break ground on the south Lake campus early next year, with the first classes offered there in January 1999.

At the same time, officials at the University of Central Florida are talking about opening a branch campus at the site, although construction may be years away. State officials who must approve the project seem interested, UCF representatives said.

"We are enthusiastic and we are trying to get others enthusiastic," said Gary Whitehouse, a UCF vice president.

Officials said that while they hope to open a campus in Clermont, they can't promise it yet.

But the South Lake Center of the community college is a sure thing, said Ken Stack, college vice president.

Stack said the college expects to close the deal to buy 112 acres for the center site. The property, on State Road 50 just east of U.S. Highway 27, is being bought from land developer Maury Carter for \$993,100.

Nick Jones, the Clermont architect drawing plans for the \$3 million center, presented preliminary drawings for the first building to college trustees Wednesday.

The 23,000-square-foot brick building will house the entire South Lake operation at first, Stack said. Several classrooms, office space and other basic facilities will be included.

College officials said the center will focus on courses in business, the hospitality industry and health care.

South Lake Hospital plans to build a new facility next door. It has fronted a share of the money to buy the property because it wants the college - and possibly the university - as its neighbor. The college building will have a second floor, which will be finished as a community room if enough money is available to cover the cost, Stack said.

The state Legislature approved the \$3 million for the project in three annual allocations, with the last - for about \$511,000 - to come through next summer.

Plans call for a total of 14 buildings, athletic fields, an amphitheater and several parking lots for the hundreds of Four Corners residents the center is expected to draw.

The prospect of luring hundreds of students is also attracting UCF to the site. The university is looking for ways to serve a growing number of students and is considering opening several satellite sites.

Whitehouse said that branches are being considered for Clermont and Kissimmee.

Whitehouse said the Board of Regents, which runs Florida's university system, has asked each school to come up with ways to handle more students.

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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