

THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

CBU OPENS CAREER WINDOWS, CHRISTENING HIGH-TECH SCIENCE CENTER

When Christian Brothers University opened its \$14 million science facility this fall, dean Johnny Holmes admits he was impressed with more than its high-tech, state-of-the-art gear.

“It might sound strange, but we love the windows,” Holmes said of the Cooper-Wilson Center for Life Sciences. “The space has a totally different feel. In the old building, I didn’t know if it was raining or snowing outside.”

Guests got a peek behind those expansive windows Tuesday during tours of the three-story, 30,000-square-foot facility. The addition of Cooper-Wilson nearly doubles the space in the science complex, which includes the old 37,000-square-foot science center, now renovated and renamed Assisi Hall Science Learning Center.

“I really think this puts a fresh face out for Christian Brothers,” Holmes said. “We’ve always had great faculty and classes, but it was sort of hidden behind this exterior that wasn’t quite this flashy.”

Designed by Askew Nixon Ferguson Architects and funded in part by the Plough Foundation and the Assisi Foundation of Memphis, the complex features updated instrumentation, fully equipped laboratories, additional classroom spaces and

student common areas.

Holmes said the enhancements makes it possible to serve more students in the growing number of CBU science courses requiring hands-on training.

“In science, it’s one thing to talk about it and another thing to do it,” he said.

The project is the latest effort to maintain a competitive edge in student recruitment and training. Over the last 10 years, CBU has seen a “significant increase” in science majors and now has 255, Holmes said. From 2003 to 2007, its graduates had an 81 percent acceptance rate into medical schools (compared to the national rate of 46 percent) and an 88 percent acceptance rate into pharmacy school. In addition, a high percentage of students were accepted into professional schools in such fields as physical therapy, dentistry, nursing, veterinary medicine and optometry.

One who has witnessed and helped cultivate that growth is Dr. Marguerite Cooper, 91, who has taught biochemistry at CBU for 30 years. It was in her honor that her daughter and son-in-law, Susan and Bob Wilson, contributed to the project.

“I think it brings Christian Brothers to a whole new level,” said Bob

Wilson. “Memphis has become one of the larger biotech areas and, although Christian Brothers was contributing to this, it was doing so with a very antiquated building and equipment.

“Now they have absolutely increased the efficiency -- both with equipment and (space) -- and will have the ability to really present to employers students with advanced knowledge that are completely capable.”

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Bishop J. Terry Steib blesses the halls and rooms of the new Cooper-Wilson Center for Life Sciences on the campus of Christian Brothers University during a ceremony Tuesday night.