

Filippi Academic Hall Opens at SMC New Home to the Kalmanovitz School of Education

By Andrea A. Firth



Courtyard view of Filippi Academic Hall the new home of the Kalmanovitz School of Education at Saint Mary's College in Moraga.

Photo by Gary Ng, SMC Department of Architecture

“This building has been a long time coming,” notes Nancy Sorenson, now in her eighth year as Dean of the School of Education at Saint Mary’s College, “The planning started with the former Dean.” Filippi Academic Hall—the new home of the Kalmanovitz School of Education at Saint Mary’s—will celebrate its official opening later this month, but staff and faculty are already making themselves at home and at work on the second floor as the final touches to the interior and landscaping are completed. Several years and over \$23 million later, Saint Mary’s students, faculty, and staff will continue to learn about learning in a building that is three times larger than the previous facility with ample centralized office space and technology-equipped classrooms.

The 600 to 650 students enrolled in graduate level course work at Saint Mary’s helps to meet the continued demand for well-qualified teachers in the East Bay. “Many of

our graduates have taken positions or hold positions in schools in the nearby area, certainly in Contra Costa County—our big draw area,” explains Sorenson. In the prior few years, the Education Department at Saint Mary’s saw substantial growth in enrollment. “We have actually surpassed the projections that were made when they first started planning the building,” notes Sorenson. “The building is quite a bit larger than the original plans that I first looked at. We certainly have room for expansion, and we have several programs that we want to target to expand.”

The 37,000 square-foot building is located in the southwest corner of the campus adjacent to Augustine Hall and across the street from the baseball field. A central courtyard featuring a large Valley Oak complements the classic architecture of Filippi Hall, which is named after longtime college supporters Frank and Olivia Filippi. The mature Oak tree was

moved from the opposite side of campus near the sports pavilion. “(Preparing the tree to be moved) was actually under way for quite some time and we weren’t paying much attention,” notes Sorenson. “Then someone pointed out that this was the tree that they were moving, and we were quite amazed.”

The opening of the Kalmanovitz School of Education in Filippi Academic Hall will be celebrated with an expert panel discussion entitled The Future of Education in California: Closing the Achievement Gap followed by an open house reception. Current students, alumni, and members of the communities and school districts with whom Saint Mary’s partners have been invited to inaugurate the Education School’s new home. According to Dean Sorenson they are expecting a good crowd and an interesting day. “In the final analysis people who have spent any time in the building are pretty pleased with what has been produced.”