President Walter Harrison announced in March that the board of regents has approved the University's plans to build a new residence hall on campus for first-year students. Construction of the new dormitory, located east of University Commons, will begin in late spring or early summer of this year, with a completion goal of fall 2007.

“I am thrilled to be able to share this news,” said Harrison. “These projects will significantly enhance the experiences of our first-year students and bring new life to the residential side of campus.”

The facility, which is expected to have between 200 and 225 beds, represents the largest residence hall construction project since the completion of the Park River apartments in 1989. In addition, the University plans major renovations over the next three summers to our oldest residence halls, the complexes. Renovations will include new bathrooms, heating systems, and bedrooms, as well as a general facelift. The complexes will remain open to students during the academic year. This summer, B Complex and D Complex will be the first to be renovated.

Construction of the new residence hall and the renovation of the six complexes will add approximately 300 beds on campus. This increase will address the housing shortage the University has been experiencing in recent years as enrollment has continued to climb.

Total estimated cost of the projects, which includes the creation of a plaza between the Commons and the new residence hall to serve as a vibrant new center of student life, is $23.5 million. Financing will be through the sale of University of Hartford bonds to be issued by the Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority.

Record enrollments in recent years at the University have produced greater demand for campus housing.
Forget the Sun and the Sand

HARTFORD STUDENTS USE SPRING BREAK TO HELP HURRICANE VICTIMS

Wick Griswold, assistant professor of sociology, and Maria Johnson, adjunct professor of English, both of Hillyer College, accompanied 20 students to New Orleans over spring break to work with the People's Hurricane Relief Fund and Oversight Coalition. The coalition is a group of Hurricane Katrina survivors. Approximately 400 other students from colleges and universities around the country also helped the organization rebuild communities ravaged by Katrina.

Accommodations were rustic. Students slept on cots in the historic St. Augustine Church in the city’s Fifth Ward. They spent their daylight hours removing debris from a flood-damaged house, painting the exterior of another house, and doing various other cleanup tasks.

“We gutted a house, which means we pulled everything from inside—furniture, books, clothes, everything. We had to wear special suits and masks. The smell was terrible and everything was covered in mold,” says Kelsey LaRochelle ’08, who reported in from New Orleans. “Many people still are not living in their homes and don’t have the money to fix them.”

Instead of the usual sunburn and tales of drinking escapades, these students returned to campus after spring break with memories of lending a helping hand in a very difficult situation.

When Love Hurts

TEENS AGAINST DATING ABUSE

Our typical picture of the high school years is a time filled with football games, proms, SATs, and, for some teens, their first romantic relationships. Unfortunately, love is not the only thing teens experience in these early romances. Growing numbers are also encountering verbal, physical, and sexual abuse. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, women between the ages of 16 and 24 are more often victims of relationship abuse than any other age group.

“We want them to know that there are people out there who understand them.” — CARRIE SPIESER ’08

Carrie Speiser ’08, now a human services major in the College of Education, Nursing and Health Professions, and three of her high school friends wanted to do something to help teens they knew who were caught in controlling and abusive relationships.

The four girls founded Teens Experiencing Abusive Relationships (TEAR) while still in high school. TEAR’s purpose is to educate teenagers about teen dating abuse by providing useful and practical information to help teens identify an abusive relationship and ultimately escape it.

“We want people to know that they are not alone,” says Speiser. “We want them to know that there are people out there who understand them, who know what they’re going through. And that there are resources to help them get out of these relationships.”

The girls, who themselves have experienced dating abuse either personally or through friends, have received many hours of crisis counseling training and now travel around the country talking to groups about dating violence. They also maintain a Web site, www.teensagainstabuse.org, where teens can receive help and hotline information.

“In the College of Education, Nursing and Health Professions, we prepare students for careers as professionals in service to their communities,” says Acting Dean Fred Sweitzer. “I am terribly proud of Carrie for exemplifying that spirit of service, not only in her studies but in her life.”

TEAR was featured in the November 2005 issue of CosmoGIRL! magazine. In January, Speiser and the other founding members of the organization appeared on ABC’s Good Morning America show. They have also taped a segment that will be shown on CBS’s The Tyra Banks Show in May.
MLK Brought His Dream to the University of Hartford

Several years before the civil rights movement gained momentum in the 1960s, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., brought his message for racial equality to the University of Hartford. King delivered a speech titled “The Future of Integration” on May 7, 1959, at Hartford’s Bushnell Memorial Hall as part of the University’s Alexander S. Keller Memorial Fund Lecture Series.

Although original audiotapes of the 48-minute speech had been housed in the University Archives, only a handful of people, including Director of University Libraries Randi Ashton-Pritting, knew of their existence. “It’s one of our hidden treasures, just not widely known,” said Ashton-Pritting.

The University of Hartford was just two years old at the time of King’s speech, and King himself was only 30. He had already gained national fame as the leader of the 1955–56 Montgomery, Ala., bus boycott, but his historic “I Have a Dream” speech was still more than four years away.

In addition to speaking as part of the Keller Lecture Series, King met informally that day with students at the University’s Hillyer College and with editors of the student newspaper, The Callboard.

“I came away from that day knowing I had been in the presence of a great man,” said Reid MacCluggage ’62, who was feature editor of The Callboard. “Four years before he shared his dream with the nation, he had shared it with us.”

MacCluggage, a former University regent and retired editor and publisher of The Day newspaper (New London, Conn.), told a Hartford Courant reporter in January: “To many of us in the 1950s, the civil rights movement was only a Southern issue. Dr. King corrected that impression. Civil rights was a human issue.”

At right: This photograph and flyer advertised King’s 1959 speech, part of a University of Hartford lecture series.
America Needs More Engineers

Lou Manzione

It’s more enticing, not to mention more lucrative, to go into law or finance. But America cannot afford to keep losing our engineering edge to other countries.

A recent report by the National Academies, “Rising above the Gathering Storm,” warned of the dire consequences of a growing shortage of American engineers and scientists. Tom Friedman’s best-selling book, The World Is Flat, described how we are falling behind the rapidly developing economies of China and India in the production of engineering talent. In his State of the Union address, President Bush urged support for more young people to enter this challenging field. With all of this attention, one might wonder whether there really is a problem.

There are no significant shortages of engineers right now—but interest in engineering has been falling for more than 20 years. This will start making a dramatic difference as the engineers of the baby boom generation, that large group inspired by Sputnik, begin to retire in great numbers over the next 10 years.

In addition, foreign students of engineering are increasingly opting to study outside the United States rather than battle visa problems here. Those who do study here are returning to their native countries to pursue more lucrative opportunities in their own burgeoning economies.

This looming crisis will significantly impact the productivity and the quality of life in the United States. Global companies will be forced to go out of the country to find the talent they need. At a time when the world’s economy is entering a period of rapid expansion, U.S.-based operations may not be able to get their share because so much of the product value will be added on foreign soil.

What can be done? First, we have to swallow some tough truths. Our young people are not misguided or lazy. In fact, they are astute in realizing that the hard work it takes to become an engineer simply may not be worth the effort in today’s American economy.

There are just too many other ways to make more money for those students with the skills and preparation to even consider engineering.

Law, medicine, and finance all provide satisfying careers, higher income, and better job security than engineering. Yet if our best and brightest continue to opt for those professions over engineering, then we as a nation continue to eat the seed corn of our innovation and wealth creation.

Here is what I recommend: Make it attractive to study, teach, and conduct research in engineering. Support the plan promoted by U.S. Sen. Christopher Dodd, known as the Protecting America’s Competitive Edge Act, which would provide scholarships to young men and women interested in math, science, and engineering, and train teachers who can help them pursue careers in these fields.

If we really believe our nation’s prosperity depends on attracting more of our brightest young people into engineering, then we have to start acting like we mean it.

We should provide tax credits and other financial incentives that encourage companies to work with universities so students see firsthand the exciting and creative careers that engineering offers. They simply will not find that image on television. In fact, we must project a more positive image of engineers and scientists in the media.

The geek caricature is getting old, and we simply cannot afford the high cost of these tired stereotypes any longer. We especially need women and minorities to step up to these technical careers since we cannot excel in the face of this steeper competition if we continue to tap only a fraction of our diverse talent pool.

Most important, we have to stop thinking that simply urging young people to go into engineering is enough. We have to devote state and federal spending to incentives that will attract them to engineering and reward them for tackling one of the most difficult majors found on a college campus. We have to act as if our economic lives depend on it.

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University High Student Testifies on Capitol Hill

Joshua Tagore, of Simsbury, Conn., testified in Washington, D.C., before a U.S. Senate subcommittee on March 1, stressing the need for more federal education support in the areas of math, science, and technology.

The 16-year-old is a sophomore at University High School of Science and Engineering, located on the University of Hartford’s Asylum Avenue campus. Tagore was invited to Washington by U.S. Sen. Christopher J. Dodd (D-Conn.), who is co-sponsoring legislation to encourage math and science education to meet the technological needs of the future.

Dodd met Tagore when he visited the high school in January to promote the package of three bills, collectively titled the Protecting America’s Competitive Edge Act.

In remarks prepared for his testimony, Tagore described the extraordinary learning environment of University High School, where he is taking courses in physics, engineering, and advanced placement biology.

“I believe that if more high school students are exposed to this kind of unique learning experience as a routine part of their high school careers, we could help to shape a nation of young adults who will gain an interest in careers involving math and science,” Tagore told the attentive senators.

As Dodd addressed his fellow senators during the testimony, he pointed to Tagore and said, “What you are looking at is the future.”

Brains, Not Brawn, for Katrina Aid

Over spring break, several students at the University of Hartford traveled to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in a novel approach to dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The Special Center on Emergency Preparedness and Relief, a project of the Roosevelt Institution, brought students together for a three-day symposium to discuss creative policy proposals for rebuilding New Orleans.

Five members of the University’s chapter of the Roosevelt Institution—Tiana Notice ’06, Alissa Rauch ’09, Edward Westwood ’09, Paije Moormann ’09, and Michelle Tafur ’09—gave their presentation, titled “Reconstructing New Orleans with the Use of Organic Architecture.” Dane Coonery ’09 helped draft the initial proposal. Their proposal was selected from those submitted by Roosevelt Institution chapters around the country.

“It was a great accomplishment as well as an enlightening experience for the University of Hartford chapter to meet students from other universities and share our work,” says chapter president Notice about attending the symposium.

The Hartford chapter’s presentation calls for the use of natural, recycled materials, like bricks and scrap metal, to rebuild houses and other structures as insulation.

The Roosevelt Institution is a student-run, nonpartisan think tank founded in 2004 at Stanford University that now has chapters at more than 120 campuses across the country. It is devoted to bringing the policy research of college students to the attention of academia, the media, and the government.

Stop-Action Video and Self-Portrait Win Goldfarb Purchase Awards

The 2006 winners of the Alexander A. Goldfarb Purchase Awards were Emily Chionchio (top right), a senior majoring in visual communication design, and Mary McCarthy, a junior majoring in painting.

Chionchio received a $1,000 Purchase Award for Garden of Suburbia, a one-minute, stop-action video that set the story of Adam and Eve in a suburban kitchen. McCarthy won for a self-portrait in oil on canvas.

The 2006 Student Exhibition and Alexander A. Goldfarb Awards are made possible through the generous support of The Private Bank of Bank of America and the Alexander A. Goldfarb Endowment Trust.