

prospective projects



CCIS NORTH QUAD
 Approved Budget: \$285,000,000
 Estimated Completion: August 2011



EDMONTON CLINIC 87 AVENUE
 Approved Budget: \$
 Estimated Completion:



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Perhaps the most conspicuous construction site on campus right now is also conspicuously absent—as U of A Vice President (Facilities & Operations) Don Hickey describes it, the Centennial Centre for Interdisciplinary Science (CCIS) is just a “big hole” right now. Of course, having not one but two cranes looming over the site at the north end of Quad day and night tends to draw a bit of attention to it as well.

At 65 000 square metres, CCIS, which won't be open until 2010, is going to be big—but according to Hickey, the recently announced Edmonton Clinic project taking place on the other side of 87 Avenue will rival it in size. In that case, its 65 000 square meters will simply be an addition to existing medical facilities.

A third major construction project currently being undertaken by the University—and the next to be completed—is the \$168 000 000 Health Research Innovation Facility (HRIF), the large complex on the corner of 87 Avenue and 112 Street that's set to open on 1 November. However, as Hickey points out, construction plans only call for it to be about half-full at this point.

“The original business case never called for a 100 per cent, fully occupied building,” he explains. “The original case was 40 per cent [occupancy]; we've added to that, and then it's expected to phase in [to complete occupancy] over the next five years.”

In fact, HRIF's initial opening was slated for this past July, but according to Hickey, labour shortages in a booming economy have been putting the brakes on these and virtually all other construction plans.

Finding labour is a “huge problem” right now, Hickey says, which makes finishing a project on time and on budget a major challenge.

But according to Hugh Warren, the University's director of infrastructure, simply finding labour isn't enough—it's finding quality labour that's proving difficult. The quality of the work in this job market, he says, “is very diluted, so it's getting to be an issue.”

Apart from labour issues, booming economies also bring strong inflationary pressures with them—an aspect that Hickey and his staff constantly struggle with as well. This aspect, coupled with the University's well-documented deferred maintenance costs (which are

“I really like South Lab because so it's going after a sustainable one of our oldest buildings”

currently pegged at \$656 million), means costs for the institution are sky-high, no matter how you slice it.

“Deferred maintenance is a significant challenge for the University of Alberta,” Warren says. “We've got the oldest buildings [and] the biggest square footage [in the province], so it's a big challenge.”

As Hickey explains, “We think we need in the order of \$80 million a year for ten years to take care of the back-log and to ensure that at the end of ten years, our buildings are all in the appropriate condition.”

However, despite these crippling backlogs, Hickey is optimistic about the University's current building