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# UW-Fox Valley arts center project plans revised

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MENASHA — A new communication arts center at the University of Wisconsin-Fox Valley would cost taxpayers more and offer less than a center proposed four years ago.

Under the new plan, the UW-Fox Valley Foundation still would raise \$2 million, but Outagamie and Winnebago counties would have to pledge \$5 million, instead of the \$3 million each had included for some time in their long-range plans.

An architectural study ordered by the two counties, which are responsible for the two-year university's buildings and maintenance, has determined that a 39,059-square-foot center will cost \$12.98 million, compared with \$12.2 million for 62,314 square feet proposed in 2002.

"We've reduced the scope of it by 37 percent and the cost has gone up by 6 percent," said campus Dean/CEO Jim Perry.



Perry

The new building, which would include a 339-seat auditorium, classroom space, a concessions booth, offices, storage areas and restrooms, would replace the university's 45-year-old Fine Arts Center, where a maximum of 290 spectators sit on folding chairs and gymnasium risers.

The university's board of trustees approved the new plan last week.

The university has wanted a new center since 1977. In 2000, it proposed a \$3.5 million project, but couldn't get both counties' support. Early this year,

university officials raised the issue again. The \$9 million cost they suggested then didn't include expenses like soil borings, site surveys, design and review fees and permanent fixtures.

Winnebago County Executive Mark Harris backs the project, but wishes the timing were better. Until at least the end of 2007, local governments are operating under state-imposed restrictions on how much they can increase property taxes.

"UW-Fox is very valuable to the Fox Valley, especially since more and more working people are finding their children priced out of an education at other institutions," he said, "and I do feel it should have an acceptable auditorium, but I wish this wasn't coming to us at a time of such heightened financial restraints."

According to architects Short, Elliott, Hendrickson Inc., inflation will increase the center's costs by almost \$1 million a year.

"I'm going to put it in the capital improvement plan for 2007 and then when it comes up in my budget, the County Board will discuss it," Outagamie County Executive Toby Paltzer said. "I am supporting it. The price is just going to escalate and get higher."

In addition to some safety code violations, SEH reported that the current center's risers and restrooms are in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

"I think it's only a matter of time before a), somebody gets hurt, or b), a suit is filed against us for deficiencies, particularly involving the ADA," Perry said.