Inspirational Move

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School of Education and Health Sciences

AN INSPIRATIONAL MOVE

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For the past two years Anne R. Crecelius, Ph.D., looked forward to the Department of Health and Sport Science's monthly staff meeting. It was one of the rare chances for Crecelius, an assistant professor, to peel away from her rather isolated office in Frericks Convocation Center, interact with fellow faculty and hopefully bump into one of her students.

This year, however, Crecelius can't swing a lab coat without running into another staff member or a student at the department's new digs in Raymond L. Fitz Hall. And she couldn't be happier.

“As a newer member of the faculty, it's been nice to get to know more of my colleagues,” said Crecelius who graduated from UD in 2007 and returned after receiving advanced degrees in cardiovascular physiology from Colorado State University.
Having bid adieu to its previous homes in Chaminade Hall and Frericks Convocation Center, the School of Education and Health Sciences capped off a major transition to Fitz Hall this past summer. The move kicked off in May 2014 when Teacher Education, Center for Catholic Education, and Dean's Office initiated the transition. After that, the Counselor Education & Human Services and Educational Administration and Health & Sports Science departments completed the move.

The shift, Creceluis said, “has expanded valuable interaction with students beyond the classroom and outside of office hours.”

For UD student Annie Bjelopetrovich, hearing about the move from Frericks to Fitz was music to her ears, somewhat literally.

“Between the volleyball courts and the music pumping from the nearby weight room, it was sometimes hard to concentrate,” said Bjelopetrovich, a senior exercise physiology major and aspiring doctor.

“I love Fitz Hall,” said Bjelopetrovich. “It’s open and bright and the classrooms are so nice.”

Nice is an understatement. The 2nd, 5th and 6th floors of Fitz Hall have undergone a major overhaul and now boast large, open classrooms, STEM lab spaces, lounge areas with overstuffed comfy chairs, offices, conference rooms walled with white boards and big screen televisions, and all the technology that budding educators, physician assistants and physical therapists must master in order to find and maintain employment in the 21st century workforce.

Crecelius, who teaches Human Physiology, Human Physiology Lab, and Research in Physical Activity and Health, said the upgrades are “optimal for group work and active learning.”

“So many of us are moving away from standing and lecturing at the students so the option to arrange tables and chairs to suit the lesson is ideal,” added Crecelius.

For professors, like Janet M. Herrelko, Associate Professor Mathematics Education and Associate Department Chair for Teacher Education, accustomed to Chaminade Hall's endearing quirks of yore, the technology upgrades are particularly welcome.

“In Chaminade, one half of the class could access the internet, while the other side of the room could not,” said Herrelko.

In the new Fitz Hall classrooms, students can practice presenting lesson plans utilizing technology such as Elmo projectors, graphing calculators and iPads, rehearse science and math experiments, and study pedagogies that rely on math tools and manipulatives.

Besides that, Fitz Hall was designed, said Josh Schrank, Director of Operations, Information & Technology, so assiduous students and educators would have a friendly space to spend down time, study and polish up group projects. It worked.

“Fitz Hall is now an attraction for others,” said Schrank who has been with UD since 1999. Whereas Bjelopetrovich might have been stuck sitting on the Frericks floor waiting for class, today she can be found perched at a high top table on the...
6th floor, filling out medical school applications with the wide campus vista spread out before her.

“The view is beautiful,” said Creceluis. Brother Raymond Fitz, the revered past president of UD for whom the building is named, agrees and is so pleased to see how UD has expanded and maintained its position as a university with outstanding academics and now even more outstanding academic settings.

“Often times classroom buildings are just that, but Fitz Hall really fosters teamwork among peers and many opportunities to sit and reflect,” said Fitz. “It’s a lovely community setting.”

Schrank admits there were some feelings of trepidation among faculty and staff, mostly because of Fitz Hall’s location some distance from the center of campus. But it didn’t take long for different departments like Physical Therapy, Health & Sport Science and others to see the value in sharing resources which ultimately translates to keeping costs down too.

But there are also former students, like Michelle Demarchi Raclaw, a 1996 graduate, who say the move is bittersweet. Raclaw, a teacher in suburban Chicago, clearly recalls walking into Chaminade Hall in the fall of 1992, climbing the staircase to her first block class and wondering how many teachers, née students, had walked the halls before her.

“I have a lot of memories from Chaminde classes,” said Raclaw. All sentimentality aside, Chaminade was built back in 1904; to that end, the building was simply getting old and needed repairs that couldn’t have been made while occupied with students.

“We needed a new home,” said Schrank and Fitz Hall’s 76,000 square feet proved to be a perfect respite for the 1,012 undergraduate and 1,028 graduate/doctoral students enrolled this year in the SEHS.

Raclaw and her husband, also a UD grad, will return to UD for her 20th class reunion this summer and she’s eager to visit Fitz Hall and maybe swing by Chaminade for a trip down memory lane.

“I can’t imagine how different the campus is for students today,” said Raclaw.

And while campus has changed dramatically over the years—Fitz Hall to some is still either the old NCR building or the CPC—Crecelius hit on one important point.

“It truly is inspiring to go to work each day in a building named for Brother Ray,” said Crecelius.

“Brother Ray championed exactly what the university stands for in terms of a commitment to strong social justice and dedication to robust academic learning.”
By Molly Blake ’96

Check out photos of our new space!