

Goldfarb: 'We are going to keep fighting' for WIU riverfront campus

Posted Online: Feb. 11, 2009, 5:22 pm

[Comment on this story](#) | [Print this story](#) | [Email this story](#)

By Dawn Neuses, dneuses@qconline.com

MOLINE -- Western Illinois University officials are not giving up on a Quad-City riverfront campus, construction of which has been stalled for six years by money shortages.

"We are going to keep fighting federally and state-wide," WIU president Al Goldfarb said during an editorial board meeting Wednesday with The Dispatch/Rock Island Argus.

"Everyone on both sides of the river and the business community wants to make this happen. I don't think we can let up. We are not going to. We will continue work with Renew Moline and other organizations in the community to make the case at all levels," he said.

The three-building campus was estimated to cost \$70 million to build when it was first designed. What it would cost today, considering inflation, is unknown, Mr. Goldfarb said.

The campus would be located on about 20 acres at 3300 River Drive, donated to the college by Deere & Co.

Mr. Goldfarb said university officials hope to meet with new Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn to discuss the campus. Money for construction has been requested through the federal stimulus program making its way through Congress. Both the the Illinois Board of Regents and Renew Moline have requested the federal money, he said.

Mr. Goldfarb said the first building, which would be a \$15 million renovation of an existing building, is ready to go. He said the campus master plan is complete, too. "It is shovel-ready. If we could just get a capital bill in the state or federal government," he said.

The university plans to move forward. An engineering program -- planned for the new campus -- will begin this fall in space it will rent in Moline. The university is hiring a director for the program.

The Board of Regents approved the engineering program in June 2008. "I think they recognized the need. They also recognized we have tried to work with the community and we had strong community support," Mr. Goldfarb said.

He hopes higher education projects are recognized by the federal government not only as projects that will put people to work in terms of immediate construction jobs, but for their potential to create new long-term jobs, too.

He added the key is to continue to lobby local legislators. "I've heard very good support from legislators from outside the Quad-Cities, too. I think we need to continue to remind those legislators a need exists in the Quad-Cities. I hope people will contact the new governor and tell him its an important project as well," Mr. Goldfarb said.

"I hope the state will come aboard and help the community. I believe it will be a reality. I just wish it would be a faster one," he added.

