

Florida Legislature Gives College of Central Florida \$4.3 Million



Architect rendering of new College of Central Florida.

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The Florida Legislature has approved \$4.3 million in funding for The Jack Wilkinson Levy Campus of the College of Central Florida a few miles

north of Chiefland, but the money won't be used for construction of buildings in the first phase. Provost Marilyn Ladner said the legislative funding signed by the governor last week will fund the first phase of pre-construction work including architectural drawings, site preparation and infrastructure for extending water and sewer to the site.

The total project is expected to cost \$18.2 million.

Water and sewer for the college will be provided by Fanning Springs. Ladner said the college is closer to Fanning Springs and the college actually has a Trenton address.

"This was the closest municipality. Fanning Springs came up with some money and we came with some money and they will provide the water and sewer," Ladner said.

Ladner said the college campus is not situated in either municipality.

The late Chiefland High School teacher Jack Wilkinson donated \$2.5 million for construction of a new college and additional \$1 million in donations has come from other members of the Levy County community, primarily from Chiefland.

"That's a lot of community support for this project," Ladner said.

The late Jack Mann and his wife LoyAnn donated 10 acres of land for the site. The college has purchased an additional 30 acres. The property borders U.S. 19 on the east side and the Nature Coast State Trail on the west.

Ladner said the college will ask for additional funding next year from the Florida Legislature.

She said the college also anticipates additional funding will come from community donations.

Wilkinson's donation will be used to "enhance facilities and equipment" at the new campus.

The College of Central Florida has outgrown its current administrative and classroom facilities at a shopping center located across the street from Chiefland High School.

A majority of students attending the Levy Center take courses associated with physical therapy and health care management, according to Ladner. They can also take basic college courses and can obtain a two-year associates degree.

The Levy Center also had its first four-year degree graduate recently. The Cedar Key student took most of his coursework at the Levy Center and a few classes in Ocala.

Ladner said many students in the modern era like to take their courses online. They grew up with computers and are comfortable with online courses. With online courses, they don't have travel incur housing expenses. They can take the courses at their home on a computer.