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Purdue to expand presence in area

More degrees will be offered

By **Dick Kaukas**

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Debra Beatty, who has four kids, will be able to get a bachelor's from Purdue because of the New Albany expansion.

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Debra Beatty, a mother of four, will be able to get a bachelor's degree from Purdue University -- but only because of the school's growing presence in Southern Indiana.

The Purdue College of Technology in New Albany, a branch campus, is increasing the number of four-year degrees it offers, including computer graphics technology, the area Beatty is interested in.

Because the New Albany branch previously offered only a two-year degree in her specialty, Beatty could have received her bachelor's only by taking classes at the main campus in West Lafayette. Late last year, however, the Purdue trustees approved computer graphics technology as a four-year program in New Albany, and officials hope to start offering courses for it in the fall.

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"That's what I've been hoping for all along. I can't pack up my family and move" to the main campus, said Beatty, 47, who works part time for Underproduction Multi-Media, a video-production company in New Albany.

The Purdue expansion is designed to attract and meet the needs of more students like Beatty -- from Kentucky and Southern Indiana.

Under an agreement between universities in the two states, Louisville-area students at the Purdue center pay the same tuition as Indiana students. That's a benefit they would not receive if they took the same classes in West Lafayette.

And the expanded degree programs aren't the only Southern Indiana initiative for Purdue.

It's also planning to open a New Albany technology center in fall 2008, with classrooms and space to nurture high-tech businesses. It's being built on 40 acres of donated land off Interstate 265.

The center -- modeled on established Purdue business incubation programs in Merrillville and West Lafayette -- is viewed by business leaders as a potential path to high-paying jobs and economic growth for the region.

It also will allow students to interact with experts and others with similar interests.

Michael Dalby, president of One Southern Indiana, the agency that has replaced the Chamber of Commerce in Clark and Floyd counties, said the expanded courses and the technology center should foster "a highly skilled, highly educated work force" that will be attractive to business.

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The classes Purdue offers in New Albany are based at the IUS campus.

Purdue students will continue to take their general education classes at IUS as they do now, potentially increasing enrollment for both schools, said Larry Mand, an IUS vice chancellor for information technology and community engagement.

"It's a nice leveraging of academic resources," Mand said of the cooperation between the two schools.

Andy Schaffer, director of the New Albany college, agreed. He noted that there's been some confusion about exactly what Purdue is doing in Southern Indiana.

"We are not building a Purdue regional campus," he said, adding that it wouldn't make sense to duplicate the kinds of classes in English, math, psychology and other subjects that students already can take at IUS. "Our long-standing relationship with IUS will continue."

Besides computer graphics technology, two other courses of study at the Purdue college in New Albany already are four-year programs: industrial technology and organizational leadership and supervision.

Schaffer said administrators hope to get two more programs, mechanical engineering technology and electrical engineering technology, approved as bachelor's degrees by the trustees as well.

Once the technology center is built, it will include classroom space for Purdue students, but only on an interim basis, Schaffer said, until a new building to house the IUS education department and all Purdue academic programs in New Albany is built at IUS.

Mand said the school will ask IU trustees to approve the new building as the next phase of its construction plans.

He said it could be built in five years. But that estimate, he acknowledged, is probably "optimistic" and getting the approvals and doing the work could take longer, depending on the economy and other factors.

When the building is finished, Mand said, Purdue students will be able to take all their classes on the IUS campus and won't have to travel to the technology center for any of them.

At that point, the center will be able to expand the business incubator programs scheduled to start when it opens in 2008.

Hopes for the center are high in part because of the successes of the two centers Purdue already has set up.

Its first "satellite" center, based in Merrillville in northwestern Indiana, has been operating about two years and has 19 tenants.

The Merrillville center has been modeled after Purdue's "research park" in West Lafayette, which has been helping new businesses grow for more than a decade and is home to 140 companies.

Twenty-two have "graduated," or reached the point where they can operate independently, without Purdue assistance, said Jeanine Phipps, a spokeswoman for the center.

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