Wiest College reconstruction delayed two years

College building to become temporary office and storage space

by Brian Stoler

It's hard to imagine that No. 4 Rice Owls are only two games into the season. However, last night's loss to the University of Texas Longhorns in Austin was more than just another game to senior Ed Frey, who believes that this game means a lot more than yesterday's game in terms of the team's potential.

"I don't think we were as naive as some other players, but we know how to handle pressure," Frey said. "We've been through a lot, but we still have a long way to go."
Ignoring student opinion on the future of Wiess

The recent decision to postpone the reconstruction of Wiess College is unsettling on many levels. We are concerned not only because of the apparent illogic of the plan, but also because of the autocratic way in which members of the administration went about forming the plan.

Why was the decision made without student involvement, it was made without student knowledge. Even Wiess Masters John and Paula Hutchinson and Vice President for Student Affairs Zenaldo Camacho were left out the loop until several weeks ago, after the decision was already made. We find disturbing the blatant omission of student input on a matter that so relevant to student life, especially since Rice tox its college system and its respect for student opinion as characteristics that make it unique.

Keeping Wiess students out of the old and new Wiess buildings for at least five years (two years more than previously estimated) could prove very damaging to Wiess' identity as a college. Wiess will go on; there is little question of that. But Wiess five years from now will have overlooked a few obvious common-sense considerations in choosing Wiess as the locus for storage and faculty offices. First, the current building's structure is at best questionable, and at worst gravely endangered by facades of little or no support whatsoever.

Because of these obvious structural problems. Rice will have to spend money just to convert Wiess space into offices and storage areas. Why would Rice allow spending for temporary use when it has seemingly ignored the building's problems for years? What makes the least sense is why the administration has chosen to place Wiess at the bottom of its list of priorities in upcoming construction. The administration is trying to squeeze a couple more years out of a dilapidated structure that has been a thorn in Rice's side for decades.

Will Wiess College ever be rebuilt?

A decision made by a small group of people behind closed doors is good cause for suspicion. So we wonder: Is this plan truly the whole truth?

Will Wiess College ever be rebuilt?

Consider:

- Wiess is located on some of the best real estate on campus, right on the Inner Loop, near Fondren Library and the humanities buildings. That would be an awful good site for an academic building.

- The number of people living off campus involuntarily doesn't quite add up to justify two more colleges, and the administration swears it isn't adding more students. Meanwhile, the plans for Martel College show new rooms being added to Jones and Brown Colleges after Martel is complete. Those would be hard to justify unless they aren't really adding two new colleges (Martel and South) but one (Martel).

- After four years, the vast majority of Wiess students will have known no other building but South College. They may not want to move — and the administration could benevolently let them stay.

- Wiess has caused the university an awful lot of headaches. (Think Night of Decadence.) Is that a reason to get rid of it?

- Think money: The university is spending a lot of money for new buildings already. Does a new Wiess fit into that budget?

- A new building named “Wiess” brings the university no naming rights. (Unless all those Wiess alumni out there start pooling funds). That makes it very hard to finance. (Vice President for Finance and Administration Dean Currie said the university will rebuild Wiess “as soon as we possibly can.” That doesn’t sound very definite.)

- Or does the name will live on after all. South College still has no name. Martel, which was due to completed later, was named first. Could it be that the name of South is... “Wiess”? Even if this sounds far-fetched. But this week’s announcement (turning decrepit Wiess rooms into faculty offices) also sounds a bit far-fetched if you think about it. We aren’t saying any of the above means anything, but...

Improving Health Services, for now

Students have numerous complaints about what Health Services is — or isn’t — doing. But the largest problem facing on-campus student health care is also its easiest and least expensive to solve: extending Health Services’ hours to include evening and weekend hours.

A student seeking medical treatment on campus either has to wait for walk-in hours — with no guarantee that he’ll see a doctor that day — or make an appointment to see a doctor later, often a day or two if from when he most needs medical attention. Adding just a couple hours per day would increase the number of students doctors can see, helping reduce the backlog of patients.

Yes, there are other problems. Health Services’ current facility in the belly of Hanszen College is woefully inadequate. It’s small, outdated and not accessible to physically handicapped students, with cramped offices and little privacy. In fact, its offices have been in need of improvement for decades, as the Student Association’s research found.

But while there is no easy way to fix the facilities problem, keeping the clinic open during evenings and on Saturdays is a matter of finding staff and funding. And a temporary solution to the latter problem is already being proposed.

Yesterday, petitions were circulated for a referendum to take an approximately $32,000 in accumulated blanket tax money and give it to the university to support increased hours for Health Services for the 1999-2000 academic year. The surplus funds had accumulated for several years when they were collected for two deffunct programs.

We can’t think of a worthier cause for the excess money. Rice has already raised health care fees without committing to any specific improvements — student health fees have more than doubled in a three-year period, jumping from $96 in 1995-96 to $214 in 1998-99. Encouraging student money for extending clinic hours would ensure some sort of concrete improvement to Health Services for the next academic year.

It’s pathetic that, at a university with such an ambitious strategic plan and so much fund raising, students have to take not only the conceptual but also the financial initiative to enact change in Health Services.

Even if it doesn’t pass, the referendum should serve as a strong message to the administration: If the university isn’t going to improve student health care, the students will try to. Even more than the SA’s letter, the referendum will serve as a wakeup call to an administration that has been alerted to problems for years but has neglected to make the dramatic improvements necessary to bring student health care to the level of quality found at comparable schools.
UNLV's Harold Betts (No. 14) gets the best of a collision at the plate with junior catcher John Lukin in the fourth inning. Betts scored on the play to cut the Rice lead to 9-4, but the Owls pulled away from the Rebels to win 16-5.

The win, coupled with Rice's 11-2 loss on Sunday, gives the Owls the top spot in the Western Athletic Conference. Rice, which was ranked fourth in the preseason poll, is now 8-5 overall and 1-0 in conference play.

Terrana, who had given up just three runs in his last two starts, was credited with the win. He allowed two runs on six hits in six innings, striking out four and walking one.

The Owls, who scored five runs in the first inning, were led by catcher John Lukin, who had three hits and scored three runs. First baseman Shane Stone also had three hits, including a home run, and drove in two runs. Shortstop Tim Collins won 6-4, 6-4 while taking the third doubles victory 8-5.

Senior Jake Hess (6-4, 6-2) pulled out relatively easily to win 6-4, 6-2 at the fifth spot, and Kevin to play some singles. The Owls have a week off before facing another WAC rival, the University of Texas at San Antonio, next Tuesday. They are 16-4 overall and 4-0 in conference play.

The Owls are currently ranked third in the conference and sixth in the nation, while Rice is ranked eighth in the nation and 21st in the conference. Both teams are coming off impressive weekend series, with Rice sweeping San Jose State and UNLV sweeping UNLV.

The Owls will face Rice again in the final game of the weekend series on Sunday. The game is scheduled to begin at 2 p.m. at the University of Houston's Reckling Park.
The men’s and women’s outdoor track teams both hosted home meets during Beer-Bike weekend. The women placed fourth in the 17th annual Bayou Classic, the largest all-female track meet in the nation, with 67 points, while the men finished second in the Meeting of the Minds with 62 points.

The University of Minnesota women took the Bayou title with 157 points. Harvard University won the three-team Meeting of the Minds with 72 points, and Minnesota rounded out the field with 19 points.

The women were back at full strength as several athletes returned from their two week break following the NCAA Indoor Championships March 6.

“We tried to put on the best meet we can, to show off Rice and the program,” Assistant Coach Jim Bevan said. “We didn’t run the whole team or even everybody in the same event as normal, but it was a good performance for late March.”

Freshman Rian Clarke, who competed at the indoor meet, opened her outdoor season with a victory in the pole vault, jumping 11’5.5, 5’1/2 inches.

Despite the windy conditions, she jumped high enough through a provisional qualification to the NCAA Outdoor Championships May 31-June 5. It wasn’t as high as she hoped, but it was what she expected after the long layoff.

“I felt like the first time out,” Clarke said. “Things are just getting going again.”

Freshman Ameer Teteris, also in her first outdoor meet as an Owl, won the 800-meter run with a time of 2:08.23, more than two seconds ahead of Rice alumni and two-time All-American Andrea Badgett.

“I liked it, basically because I ran well,” Teteris said. “It was a little nervous because I like the indoor races a lot better than the outdoor ones. It was windy, and not the best conditions for a meet.”

Senior Alexis Smith won the 400-meter hurdles in 59.00, the Owls men’s best time of the season.

“Instead of trying to win, we were just trying to run fast,” Head Coach Raymond Davidson said. “We could have put up our runners to get more points, but then we wouldn’t be ready for the Texas Relays.”

Sophomore Lachlan McArthur led the Owls with wins on both days of competition. He edged out sophomore Tyson Hendrickson in the 5,000-meter run, finishing with a time of 14:23.71 to Hendrickson’s 14:25.85. The times were personal bests for both.

McArthur’s second victory in as many days came in the 1,500-meter run, which he finished in 4:04.27.

“It wasn’t my ideal 1,500,” McArthur said. “I was way ahead, and I know I wasn’t going to get a [personal record], so I shut it down a bit.”

Seniors Justin Burrow and Derrick Small turned in another one-two finish in the 800. Burrow finished in the lead in 1:49.95, followed by Small in 1:51.75.

The team is looking forward to several upcoming meets, including the Texas Relays, and the Penn Relays at the end of April.

“There’s plenty left in the season,” McArthur said.

Student robbed in parking lot outside music school Thursday

by J. Cameron Cooper

A student was robbed in the stadium parking lot Thursday night. The robbery is the first such incident reported this year and the sixth on-campus robbery since 1998, according to Campus Police crime statistics.

Around 11:22 p.m., Thursday, a student parked his car about four rows into the lot by Alice Pratt Brown Hall, locked it and walked toward the building. Campus Police Chief Mary Voswinkel said.

“When he got to the third row, a man approached him, and said, ‘Give me all your money or I’ll kill you.’” Voswinkel said.

As the student fled toward Alice Pratt Brown Hall, a car drove up the parking lot road, and the driver yelled to the two suspects to get in.

The suspect took the student’s wallet and car keys and then brought him to his car. “They tried to open it, but there were multiple keys. As they tried to unlock it, the student broke and ran,” Voswinkel said.

As the student fled toward Alice Pratt Brown Hall, a car drove up the parking lot road, and the driver yelled to the two suspects to get in.

The car then left campus, turning right on Rice Boulevard from Entrance 12. The Campus Police later recovered the stolen keys at the Outdoor Loop jogging track near Entrance 13. The wallet was not recovered.

The Campus Police later learned that two similar robberies of persons unaffiliated with Rice had occurred that night near campus, one near the Graduate House and the other in the Medical School.

The Campus Police are working with the Houston Police Department to investigate the robberies. Police are analyzing evidence collected by HPD and the off-campus robberies and partial fingerprints found on the student’s car in the stadium parking lot.

A similar robbery that happened near the Grad House March 9, in which a man robbed a student and his companion at gunpoint and took their wallets and car keys, is also under investigation. Campus Police have said there is a possibility that these are the same suspects as in Thursday’s incident.

The suspect also approached the student in Thursday’s on-campus robbery had his shirt over what he represented as a gun, Voswinkel said. While the victim never actually saw the gun, he did think they had the capability of carrying out the threat,” according to Voswinkel.

In the March 9 robbery near the Grad House, the victim clearly saw the suspect’s “blue steel handgun,” Voswinkel said.

The suspects’ vehicle in Thursday’s robbery is described as a white 1980s model Oldsmobile Cutlass.

The police report describes the first two suspects as black males between the ages of 17 and 20. The suspect who first approached the student is described as about 5 feet 10 inches tall, weighing 210 pounds, with short black hair.

The second suspect is described as around 6 feet 1 and weighing about 250 pounds, with a short Afro. The report describes the driver of the vehicle as a black male.

Passover is coming!

HILLEL FOUNDATION WILL BE SERVING KOSHER FOR PASSOVER MEALS at Hillel Student Center, 1700 Bissonnet

MEAL SCHEDULE
Sunday, April 4, 1999
Dinner 6:00-7:30 p.m.
Tuesday, April 6, 1999
Dinner  6:00-7:30 p.m.

For students who cannot come to the Hillel Student Center, we will bring Passover lunch to the Rice campus on Monday, April 5 from 11:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the Farnsworth Pavilion in the Student Center and on Tuesday, April 6 from 11:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the Baker Library.

For more info or to RSVP, call Laura (713) 526-4918 or send her e-mail at hillel@houstonhillel.org.