



New, improved facilities enhance campus

In spite of the ongoing challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, Southeastern Oklahoma State University continues to move forward.

Last month, the University announced it had set a school record for the highest enrollment in a spring semester with 5,010 students.

Now, with an eye to the future, Southeastern has a number of new facilities in the works -- some complete, and some in the planning stages.

Recently completed are the Semple Family Museum of Native American Art, a strength and conditioning facility, and a volleyball gymnasium. On the drawing board is a new coffee shop and a new equestrian center.

“We are excited about all of these projects,” said Southeastern president Thomas Newsom. “In some cases, such as with the art museum and the coffee shop, not only will our campus benefit, but so will the local community. In addition to university funding, we were able to utilize generous gifts from donors to help offset many of the costs associated with these additions and improvements. We are also in the process of updating our campus facilities master plan to assist us in developing a vision for the future.”

Following is an update on the new projects:

Semple Family Museum of Native American Art

– This 5,000 square-foot multi-level facility was recently completed and houses Southeastern’s extensive collection of Native American art.

Funded by a gift from the Semple family, the museum is located north of the Fine Arts Building and Russell Building on Montgomery/Dunlap Drive. Family members involved in the project are Frank Semple, a retired energy industry executive, Janie Semple Umsted, a local artist and director of the Southeastern Art Gallery, and Sarah Semple Brown, an architect.

The facility includes an art gallery, audio-visual

classroom, reception area, balcony, and walkout patio, which overlooks the historic Amphitheater.

The project is the result of a collaboration among the Semple family, the University, and Southeastern Foundation.

A grand opening will be held at a later date.

Athletics Strength & Conditioning Center, volleyball gymnasium

– Southeastern Athletics completed its first major facilities campaign in 2020, which included a renovated volleyball gym, as well as a new strength and conditioning center, which houses a weight room and turf room in Bloomer Sullivan Gymnasium.

The strength and conditioning center is located north of the volleyball gym in a renovated space previously occupied by a swimming pool. The two areas (weight room and turf room) are approximately 5,000 square feet and 10,000 square feet, almost doubling the space of the previous weight room.

Student-athletes began training in the new facility in August 2020; the volleyball team has been practicing in its renovated gym since last fall, with games scheduled this spring.

Both University and private fundraising (“Strong Together” campaign) was utilized for the projects.

Einstein Bros. Bagels

– This new dining facility will be located next to the SE Barnes & Noble store on University Avenue, with the anticipated opening set for summer 2021.

Einsteins will be open for breakfast and lunch, with a menu that includes bagels, salads, wraps, sandwiches, desserts, and a full-service coffee bar now crafting Caribou Coffee. It will also be the first Einstein Bros. at a university to feature the convenience of a drive-thru.

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The Semple Family Museum of Native American Art was recently completed on campus.



Late winter blast hits campus



A mid-February blast of ice and snow may have caused some major inconveniences while closing the Southeastern campus for a few days, but it did offer some scenic views of landmarks at the University. (Photos by Dan Hoke)





Clockwise, from top left: Athletes work out in the new weight room; a sign marks the location of the future Einstein Bros. Bagels; an interior view of the Semple Family Museum of Native American Art; a volleyball match being played in the new facility in Bloomer Sullivan Gymnasium.

New equestrian center in the works

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Einsteins will provide a third option for students to utilize their meal plans (others are cafeteria and Magnolia Eatery), and in addition, it will be open to the community.

Southeastern is partnering with Einstein Bros. and Sodexo on the project, which is being funded with capital dollars from Sodexo and auxiliary revenue.

Equestrian Center – Also planned is a new facility for the Southeastern Rodeo Team, with a groundbreaking to be held later this year. The new equestrian center will be located on First Street, near the Southeastern softball fields, and replace the existing facility on Ninth Avenue. More details will be available in the coming weeks.

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Blood drive on campus

Every eight weeks, the Southeastern Oklahoma State University Office of Student Life partners with the Oklahoma Blood Institute to host a blood drive on campus. The Institute's bloodmobile was parked recently on campus with students, faculty, staff, and the general public participating as donors. Southeastern and East Central University maintain a fun rivalry as to who can provide the most donors over an eight-week period, with a traveling trophy at stake (currently held by Southeastern). Due to COVID-19, the Oklahoma Blood Institute has taken all precautions to follow CDC and campus guidelines.

Southeastern announces plans to hold commencement in-person outdoors

Southeastern Oklahoma State University recently announced plans to move forward in planning for an in-person commencement this spring.

The University is in the process of developing a plan to host several in-person graduation ceremonies the weekend of May 7 -- May 9 at Paul Laird Field on the campus in Durant. These ceremonies will celebrate the commencement of 2020 graduates and May 2021 graduates.

For those students graduating in the Summer of 2021, the University will hold a ceremony at the end of the 2021 Summer semester. The commencement plans will balance the tradition of the ceremony with safety concerns for graduates, guests, and staff with respect to public health and safety.

"Commencement is one of the most important events on campus as we celebrate the accomplishments of students, faculty, and staff through graduation," said Southeastern president Thomas Newsom. "I am excited that we are able to move back to providing this experience for our University family."

On a future date, each graduate for 2020 and May

2021 will be contacted via their student email to register for their corresponding ceremony. Based on that registration, the University will determine how many guests each graduate may invite to attend. Tickets will be required for graduates and their guests, and the number of guests may be limited.

All ceremonies will be held outdoors at Paul Laird Field. In the event of inclement weather, the ceremony will be delayed until later the same day. If the weather does not allow for that to happen, the ceremony will be canceled as the University does not have the ability to safely move the ceremonies indoors at this time.

In addition, all ceremonies will be live streamed and an online-only ceremony will be available for viewing for those who are unable to attend or do not wish to attend in person. All participants, graduates, guests, and staff will be required to wear a face mask and maintain social distancing during the event.

Further details for the ceremonies will be released as soon as possible.