



From Benedictine University

\$6.7 million Rice Center project draws universal raves at open house

Lisle, Illinois ~ “It exceeds my expectations.” “It’s really phenomenal.” “It’s amazing.”

The praise was abundant Friday when Benedictine University unveiled the recently-renovated Dan and Ada Rice Center to faculty, staff and students at a Benedictine community open house.

Hundreds of people poured through the \$6.7 million project, which includes an 11,000-square foot fitness facility, day lockers, offices, the Benedictine Hall of Fame, an executive suite, classroom, meeting areas and a state-of-the-art athletic training facility.

Chris Kordick, a sophomore Health Science major from Plymouth, Mich. and a member of the Benedictine baseball team, was blown away by the fitness facility.

“It’s unreal for a Division III facility to have this quality of stuff,” he said. “It’s just amazing. You go upstairs, it looks like a Division I weight room. From an athlete’s perspective, to have this equipment and to be able to go that hard, to be able to do the lifts that this equipment gives you, it’s going to give you a competitive advantage.”

A 7,500-square foot lower level is dedicated to cardio and circuit training that will allow patrons to complete all levels of training and fitness activities. The cardio center features elliptical trainers, treadmills and stationary bicycles. The lower level also includes a private dance/exercise studio.

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“It’s amazing,” said Jill Lipman, a junior Sports Management major and basketball player from Chicago. “I can’t wait to use everything. I think it’s only going to help us accelerate our program and be stronger physically. We’ll win more NAC (Northern Athletics Conference) championships.”

A 4,200-square foot strength training mezzanine provides users with a dedicated space to build the strength necessary to compete on an intercollegiate level or compete in amateur-level athletic competition. The additional weight training area contains both free weights and strength training equipment to cater to a variety of users.

The renovations include new offices and classrooms, and an advanced training facility that features both hot and cold tubs.

“I’m speechless,” said Regina Schurman, director of the Master of Science in Clinical Exercise Physiology program at Benedictine. “It exceeds my expectations. It’s going to give our students more ability to practice their hands-on skills and to work with the campus community, to really go out and be proficient practitioners. This is just awesome.”

Larry Lillwitz, a 1966 alumnus from Naperville, had not been to the Rice Center in many years. His visit Friday provided a number of surprises.

“It’s phenomenal,” Lillwitz said. “I don’t know if I’ve been in all the nooks and crannies (of the Rice Center) since I’ve been away and come back. I knew the stuff was in here. I just can’t believe how they utilized the space to make so much more out of it. They said they didn’t even increase the footprint. It’s the same footprint. There’s just so much more stuff. It’s really phenomenal.”

The Benedictine Fitness Center will be open to students, faculty and staff beginning Monday, October 31, said John Morris, Associate Vice President for Advancement at Benedictine.

“We’re so excited for everybody on campus to use this facility,” he said. “What has been a pleasure for me is watching the people walking up with their cameras, taking pictures on their cell phones and emailing them to their families or friends and alumni.

“The transformation (of the building) is amazing,” Morris added. “Now we have a place on campus where a student can come and run on a treadmill next to the professor who just gave them a lecture and share in that kind of social interaction.”

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The project was the result of the generosity of the Rice Family Foundation and hundreds of individual and corporate donors, including members of the Benedictine community.

“We’re just excited for the Benedictine community and we’re thankful for everybody who made this happen,” Morris said. “More than 900 people contributed to this financially, not to mention the thousands of people who dreamed for this building for a long time.

“For me, that’s what it’s all about at the end of the day,” he added. “The benefit for everyone now, and the impact it’s going to have for the next 40, 50 years and the thousands of future students, faculty and staff who will benefit from this facility.”

DLR Group was the architect on the project and International Contractors, Inc. was the builder on the project.

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Benedictine University is an independent Roman Catholic institution located in Lisle, Illinois just 25 miles west of Chicago. Founded in 1887, Benedictine provides 53 undergraduate majors, 13 graduate and four doctorate programs. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* recently ranked Benedictine University as the seventh fastest-growing campus among private nonprofit master’s universities, and *Forbes* magazine named Benedictine among the top 20 percent of America’s colleges for 2011. Benedictine University’s Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.) program is listed by *Crain’s Chicago Business* as the fourth largest in the Chicago area in 2011.



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