

FISCAL YEAR 2015  
CAPITAL OUTLAY PROJECT REQUEST

Institution Name: Oakland University

Project Title: Varner Hall Expansion

Project Focus:      Academic                    Research                    Administrative/Support

Type of Project:    Renovation                    Addition                    New Construction

Program Focus of Occupants: Social Science including Arts

Approximate Square Footage: 258,000 GSF

Total Estimated Cost: \$98 Million

Estimated Start/Completion Dates: Immediately, construction will start one year after funding approval.

Is the Five-Year Plan posted on the institution's public internet site?                    Yes      No

Is the requested project the top priority in the Five-Year Capital Outlay Plan?                    Yes      No

Is the requested project focused on a single, stand-alone facility?                    Yes      No

**Please provide detailed, yet appropriately concise responses to the following questions that will enhance our understanding of the requested project:**

**1. Describe the project purpose.**

The proposed 258,000 square foot Oakland University Varner Hall Expansion will provide state-of-the-art instructional and laboratory space for Oakland University's College of Arts and Sciences. The proposed building will be an addition to the existing Varner Hall, and will expand the available teaching facilities to accommodate the expansive growth in students and majors in the Arts and Sciences. The expanded building will directly address space needs in technology and laboratories that are at the core of twenty-first century teaching and academic programs.

The newly expanded building will house much-needed instructional and research facilities for programs in the following fields:

- Psychology
- Political Science
- Public Administration
- Sociology
- Anthropology
- Social Work
- History
- Communication and Journalism
- Music
- Theatre
- Dance
- Writing and Rhetoric
- Criminal Justice

In addition, the new building will support new facilities for the following University service:

- Video Services

The on-campus functions of the College of Arts and Sciences are currently dispersed over nearly every building on campus, including Varner Hall which also houses the administrative offices of the College. The consolidation of these academic functions in the proposed Varner Hall Expansion will co-locate and build cooperative teaching, technology, and learning opportunities for the students of Oakland University's College of Arts and Sciences.

The design and functionality of the Varner Hall Expansion will follow state-of-the-art standards for educational systems, concentrating on the concept of living and learning communities and the centrality of student-related functions. Project goals that will be achieved through the implementation of this project are:

- Increased emphasis on hands-on learning
- Increased emphasis on informal and peer learning
- Enabling student organizations as a learning channel
- Enhancement of project based learning
- Increased student involvement in original research
- Additional high-tech, appropriately equipped and designed learning spaces
- More flexibility to allow evolution and change in technologies, programs, and pedagogies

The added space and enhanced capabilities provided in the Varner Hall Expansion will enable increased recruitment and retention of students, and support the University's goal of significantly increased enrollments by 2020. As by far the largest college at Oakland University, the students and faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences are in great need of additional programmatic teaching and laboratory space.

## **2. Describe the Scope of the Project.**

The scope of this proposed project is a 258,000GSF addition to the existing Varner Hall. Varner Hall, originally constructed in 1970, is one of the oldest buildings on campus. Additional space is crucial to address the current severe space shortages as well as to sustain the desired growth in enrollment across the College of Arts and Sciences, which produces 62% of the University's student credit hours. The proposed Varner Hall Expansion is designed to accommodate the growth in size and diversity of academic programs that promote the quality of the educational, scholarly, and community outreach activities. This project will provide a focal point for units in the College of Arts and Sciences that serve the region of Southeast Michigan.

The proposed building addition will house digital classrooms, technology-enabled learning studios, and student-centered laboratories, as well as expansion of space for faculty-student interaction. It will become the hub and focus of the College of Arts and Sciences at Oakland University. Its strategic location near the center of campus will facilitate student access and engagement, as well as synergy within the College. By connecting the programmatic and teaching functions with the college administration and faculty resources, the proposed facility expansion is programmed to engage more students with faculty at a higher level.

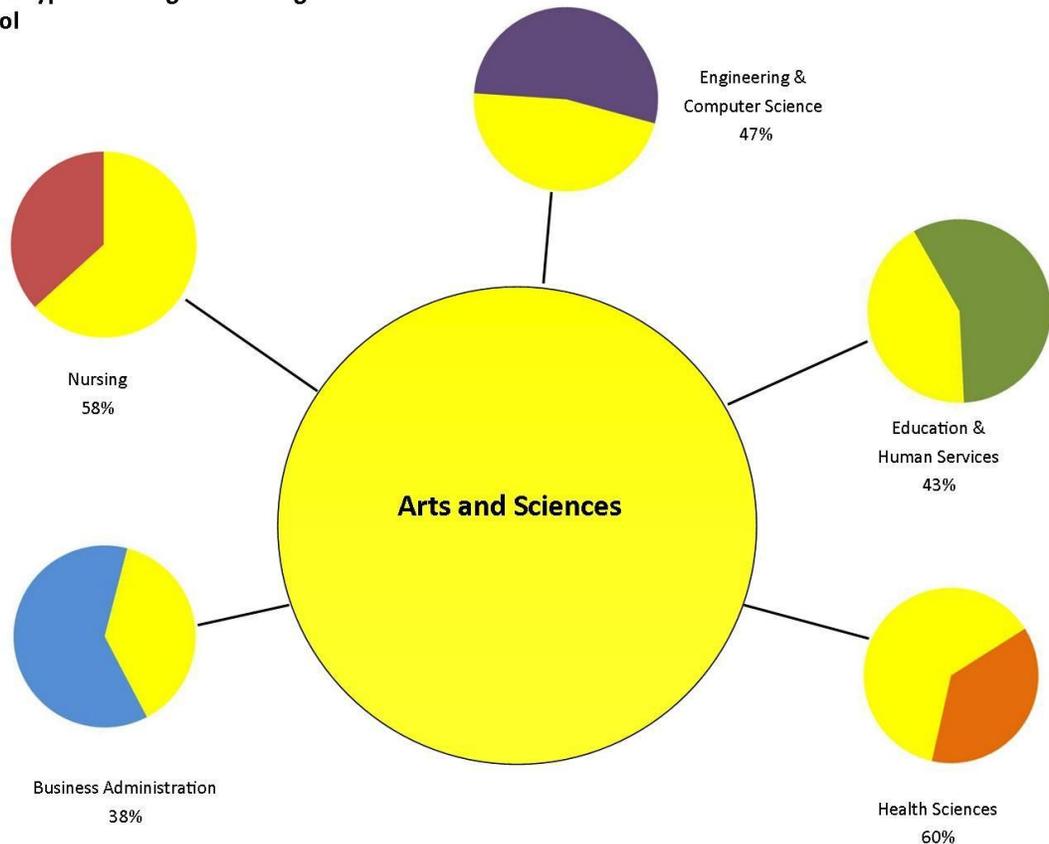
By proposing an addition to the existing Varner Hall, the project can be constructed without the temporary relocation of any of the currently existing teaching and faculty resources, thereby saving project cost. In addition, when complete and fully occupied, this proposed project will create other space on campus for use and re-purposing by other campus departments that are also in need of additional programmed teaching space. The efficiency of this approach is consistent with University goals and objectives,

minimizes academic disruption due to construction activities, and provides state-of-the-art, department specific academic space.

### 3. How does the project enhance the core academic and/or research mission of the institution?

The College serves all undergraduates through General Education and major prerequisites in other Schools on campus—at least 38%, and as high as 60% of the credits completed by majors in other Schools are earned in the College. The new space will allow the College of Arts and Science to continue to serve the growing programs in other Schools in an effective way. The current departments in Varner Hall (Music, Theatre, and Dance (MTD); Sociology, Anthropology, Social Work, and Criminal Justice; Political Science; and History) enroll more than 1400 majors (more than the School of Engineering and Computer Science). The improved quality of MTD space is likely to result in recruitment of higher achieving students and the provision of a greater number of, and more varied, arts events to the community. The opportunity to bring more of the Social Sciences into the same space is likely to increase academic and research collaboration.

**Percentage of College of Arts and Sciences credits required for typical undergraduate degrees in each School**



**4. How does the project enhance Michigan's talent enhancement, job creation and economic growth initiatives on a local, regional and/or statewide basis?**

Two recent surveys of employers conducted for the American Association of Colleges and Universities by Hart Research Associates (2007, 2010) provided findings relevant to this question. Employers say that they are looking for employees who have a broad range of skills and knowledge and in-depth skills and knowledge in a specific field or major. The Varner Hall Expansion project provides Oakland with an opportunity to do both. Through General Education courses the College provides students of all majors with the "broad range of skills" that employers are seeking. Skills like being able "to effectively communicate orally and in writing" and "critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills" which were the two skills with the largest agreement in the survey. Within the majors represented in this project, Oakland provides students with the in-depth skills and knowledge of specific majors and provides students with the kind of experience-based learning that the survey respondents identified as important. This project, therefore, provides the venue that will enhance talent development and produce graduates armed with the tools that employers are seeking.

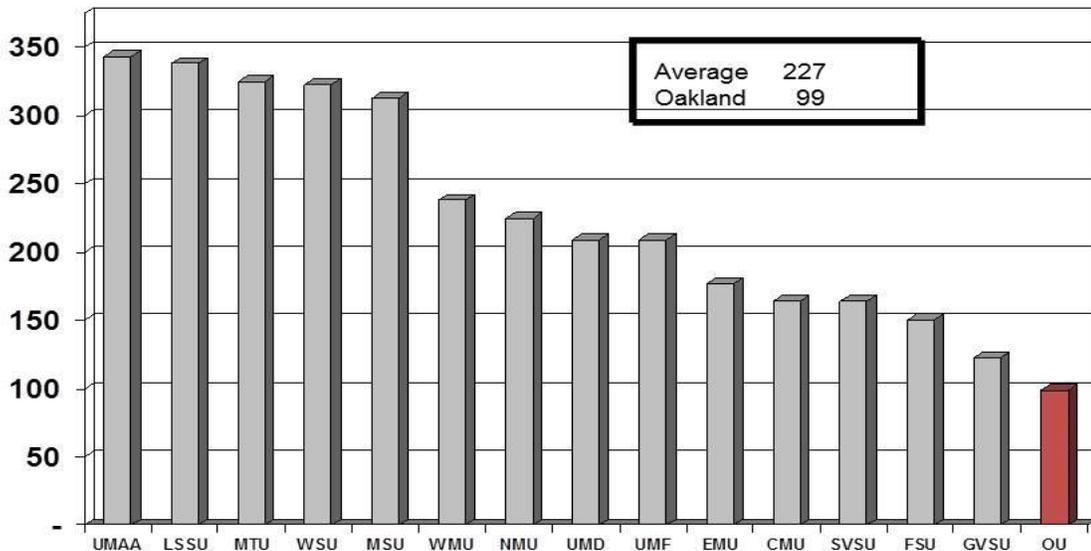
**5. How does the institution measure utilization of its existing facilities, and how does it compare relative to established benchmarks? How does the project help to improve the utilization of existing space and infrastructure, or support the need for additional space and infrastructure?**

Oakland University measures space utilization through the use of appropriate data based on current demands and future expectations. Using national and state planning guidelines and peer comparisons, this data is used to create space needs calculations considering availability, condition, utilization, location and adjacencies between the assessed needs and the existing space. A space inventory of all buildings has been created and is updated continuously.

Without the additional space provided by this project, the College of Arts and Science, and the University as a whole, will be challenged to meet anticipated enrollment growth. Oakland has a significant shortage of full time and part time faculty offices and instructional areas. Compared to other similar universities and based on the space needs calculations, the University has a long term need for a significant increase of assignable square footage. This project will help relieve that shortage.

See the following chart on the next page for a comparison of General Fund square footage per student from FY2012 HEIDI data, showing Oakland with the lowest level in the state; far less than half the average.

## FY2012 General Fund Building Sq. Ft. per FYES



Source: HEIDI

**6. Does the project address or mitigate any current life/safety deficiencies relative to existing facilities? If yes, please explain.**

The Varner Hall Expansion project represents all new construction, and is a new addition/expansion of the existing Varner Hall. It will not mitigate or address any currently existing deficiencies in other facilities. This proposed project allows for the creation of state-of-the-art, technology enabled learning studios and laboratories that are designed to comply with all current life safety codes and requirements for student occupancy and instruction.

**7. How does the institution intend to integrate sustainable design principles to enhance the efficiency and operations of the facility?**

Sustainable design principles will be implemented in all aspects of this proposed project including materials and resources, indoor environmental quality, design innovation, site sustainability, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, and regional priorities.

**8. Are match resources currently available for the project? If yes, what is the source of the match resources? If no, identify the intended source and the estimated timeline for securing said resources?**

No, however, if this project receives State funding approval, plans are in place to immediately begin soliciting private support for the required matching funds, and, if necessary, bonds will be issued to supplement the private support.

**9. If authorized for construction, the state typically provides a maximum of 75% of the total cost for university projects and 50% of the total cost for community college projects. Does the institution intend to commit additional resources that would reduce the state share from the amounts indicated? If so, by what amount?**

Oakland University does not have such plans at this time.

**10. Will the completed project increase operating costs to the institution? If yes, please provide an estimated cost (annually, and over a five-year period) and indicate whether the institution has identified available funds to support the additional cost.**

Yes, the project will increase operating costs. Operating costs would be funded by a combination of campus-wide cost containment initiatives, reallocation of existing budgetary resources, and possibly, increased tuition revenues.

Project Annual and 5 Year Operating Budget (258,000 sf)		
	\$ /sf	
Plant Engineering	0.04	\$10,320
Custodial Cleaning	1.75	\$451,500
Bldgs. & Grounds	0.75	\$193,500
Plant Maintenance	0.22	\$56,760
FM Admin.	0.02	\$5,160
Skilled Trades (persons)	1 ½	\$135,000
Purchase Utilities	2.25	\$580,500
Security		\$25,000
GSF		\$20,000
Year 1 Total		\$1,477,740
Year 2 (3% increase)		\$1,482,173
Year 3 (3% increase)		\$1,486,620
Year 4 (3% increase)		\$1,491,080
Year 5 (3% increase)		\$1,495,553
Total for 5 Years		\$7,433,165

**11. What impact, if any will the project have on tuition costs?**

Potential debt service and operating costs would be funded by a combination of campus-wide cost containment initiatives, reallocation of existing budgetary resources, and possibly, increased tuition revenues.

**12. If this project is not authorized, what are the impacts to the institution and its students?**

The consequences related to not providing this facility for Oakland University students relate to a diminished quantity and quality of instructional space. The current facilities are over 100% of capacity,

with hallways and storage areas being used for instructional purposes, so it would be very difficult for any of the current programs to grow or to develop new programs within these areas. Oakland will be much less competitive in recruiting students, especially in Music, Theater, and Dance due to the quality of space.

**13. What alternatives to this project were considered? Why is the requested project preferable to those alternatives?**

The College of Arts and Sciences will be the sole occupant of the proposed new addition to Varner Hall. Currently, College programs and departments are scattered across the entire campus, with little identity or academic synergy for the departments. Through extensive study it was determined that there is no other space on campus that could be cost effectively renovated to meet the needs of all of the College departments. Other sites on campus were studied for appropriateness and cost effectiveness to accommodate the programmatic needs of growth and academic synergy in CAS. No other site provides the combination of construction efficiency, departmental co-location, and program identity for current and recruited students.

In addition, Oakland University has the lowest ratio of space to students of all the public universities in the State of Michigan (see chart in section 5, above). Growth in space at Oakland has not nearly kept pace with the strategic enrollment growth on campus. The proposed location on campus for the Varner Hall Expansion is the best and most efficient site to address this important need for state-of-the-art technology-enabled learning space.