

BRINGING STETSON HALL & SAWYER LIBRARY INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: THE CASE FOR RENOVATION AND EXPANSION

Stetson-Sawyer Planning Committee
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With the successful completion of the Unified Science Center on the south side of the campus, Williams has science facilities worthy of a great liberal-arts college. But the unveiling of the new Science Quad has brought into high relief major deficiencies of the most important buildings of the north side of the campus, Stetson Hall and Sawyer Library, regarded by many as the very heart of the Williams experience for students and faculty. This document briefly explains why renovation and expansion of these buildings are needed and what shape we hope these improvements will take. Above all, we wish to make the case for redesigned spaces that encourage the type of student-faculty interaction that the College sees as its strongest asset, but which is now impeded by Stetson and Sawyer's architectural constraints. The project will create new opportunities for collaborative teaching and learning that brings together students, faculty, librarians, and information technology professionals.

Our analysis is the result of four years of hard work, first as a committee commissioned to explore the future of Stetson Hall, then, two years later, as a reconfigured panel that examined the joint needs of Stetson and Sawyer, buildings linked as much by a shared history and mission as by physical proximity. The committee's deliberations have most recently focused on identifying architectural firms that will do the best job of realizing our goals for these key Williams buildings.

We are convinced that this project is essential if the College wishes to retain its competitive edge. Recent curricular reforms cannot be implemented fully without the architectural resources that make them possible. The modernization and expansion of Stetson and Sawyer are essential for the full realization of institutional goals identified during the Strategic Planning process initiated three years ago.

History. Stetson Hall, an elegant Georgian Revival building designed by the firm of Cram & Ferguson and commissioned as the College and Chapin libraries in 1923, was converted in large part into a classroom and office building in the mid-1970s after the construction of Sawyer Library. Today, Stetson houses approximately 95 faculty members as well as several library and service units: the Chapin Rare Books Library, Archives and Special Collections (formerly Williamsiana), Central Office Services (the College's in-house print shop and center for office supplies), and the Office of Career Counseling (OCC). The Office for Information Technology (OIT) also has a small presence in the building's basement. Approximately a third of Stetson's square footage still

remains in the hands of the Chapin Library and the Archives, although much of this space is in the core stacks area normally closed to the public.¹

Stetson has long been one of the College's signature buildings, but it has serious functional liabilities that reflect its early twentieth century origin and the cumulative impact of subsequent additions. The converted library stacks that became faculty offices in 1976 have a ceiling height of 6'10", which gives these floors a claustrophobic feel. The building's labyrinthine floor plan is notoriously difficult to navigate. Stetson offers no significant study areas for students, nor does it contain public spaces where students and faculty can have the kind of unplanned interactions that are proving so productive in the new science center. Its offices and hallways are increasingly shabby, and the building's mechanical systems have reached the end of their service life.

The library units in Stetson operate under severe constraints. Users of the Archives and Chapin are confused by the two related but physically separate facilities, a situation that the project will improve by providing a shared reading room and staff work spaces. Perhaps most unsettling is the consistent failure of the Chapin and Archives storage facilities to meet or even approach national standards for environmental control. This means that the Chapin holdings, valued at approximately \$200 million, to say nothing of the Archive's irreplaceable collection of documents related to the history of Williams, are suffering long-term damage from abrupt changes of temperature and humidity.

Sawyer Library, designed by Harry Weese & Associates and opened in 1976, is a controversial building that many faculty and alumni feel should never have been built on this site because of its architectural incompatibility with Stetson. Visiting architects admire its internal use of natural light and novel seating arrangements for students, but all agree that the slab-like south facade of the building presents a forbidding face to Main Street and the larger world. The peculiar entrance to the building, which requires patrons first to descend, then to climb, in order to find the circulation and reference desks, baffles first-time visitors. Sawyer was designed at a time when students and faculty sought to work independently of one another. This is no longer the case. Among Sawyer's important functional drawbacks are a lack of group work spaces for collaborative student projects,² an absence of facilities for the creation and use of multimedia resources, an illogical arrangement of major service points and collections, a critical shortage of room for new acquisitions (with all available stack areas expected to be filled by 2006), and stack aisle widths that are seriously below national standards. Many visitors to the College are also surprised that Sawyer has no general reading

¹ This estimate includes Sawyer Library's off-site storage tiers in the Stetson stacks. It should be noted that Archives and Special Collections is administered by the Library, whereas the Chapin is an independent administrative unit reporting directly to the President.

² Demand for the group study rooms in Schow Science Library has proved so great that students must now sign up for them in advance. They are used for group projects assigned in classes from all academic divisions of the College.

room, a category of public space that seemed destined for obsolescence in the 1970s but which has returned to prominence in the nation's finest libraries.

A final characteristic of the Stetson and Sawyer precinct worthy of comment is the poorly designed or underdeveloped public space around the buildings. A high percentage of the College's most valuable land is devoted to pavement for parking. The campus east-west pedestrian axis—between the Stetson driveway and Baxter—is poorly developed, and the paved patio between Stetson and Sawyer seems designed to thwart public gatherings rather than encourage them.

Between 1998 and 2000, the Stetson-Sawyer Planning Committee worked closely with consulting architects from Childs Bertman Tseckares, Inc., to develop a draft program and explore siting options. Other consultants were retained to help identify present and future needs for Sawyer Library and the Office of Information Technology. Three members of our committee, including the co-chairs, were also involved in the recent campus planning process led by Venturi Scott Brown & Associates. The remarks that follow have been shaped by the expertise of these consultants and by exhaustive discussions within the Williams community.

REINVENTING STETSON-SAWYER

Skillful development of the Stetson-Sawyer precinct can give Williams something that the best American colleges and universities talk about but thus far have been unable to deliver: an integrated network of buildings that bring together students, faculty, traditional library resources, and leading-edge technology in an environment that promotes collaborative learning in the humanities and social sciences.

An indispensable element of this transformation will be respectful treatment of the College's existing architecture, complemented by imaginative new construction sensitive to architectural context and the goals of energy efficiency and ecological sustainability. Equally important is the creation of more thoughtful and refined outdoor spaces—landscape and hardscape—that energize campus life and call attention to views of the surrounding hills.

The most important ingredients of this mix—committed faculty and professional staff, and talented students—are already in place. Needed now are the resources and institutional will to bring this vision to fruition.

Program elements. The following are the principal elements of our vision for the future of the quadrant of campus dominated by Stetson and Sawyer:

- Stetson Hall should undergo a thorough renovation to restore its historically significant 1923 portion. The building's floorplan should be rationalized by razing post-1923

additions and replacing them with a modern annex containing lecture halls, seminar rooms, public spaces, faculty offices, and facilities for special library collections. Because of concerns about scale, our current thinking is that the new Stetson addition will not be significantly larger than the building's existing footprint.

The two special collection libraries housed in Stetson, the Archives and Special Collections Department and the Chapin Rare Books Library, have reached the limit of their storage capacity and offer insufficient work space for patrons and staff. Our plan is to replace existing inefficient shelves with compact storage shelving and to reorganize staff offices, exhibit halls, reading rooms, and preparation areas so that the units share spaces whenever possible.

- Because a rebuilt Stetson cannot accommodate the 185 faculty offices for which our committee was asked to develop plans, we foresee at least one entirely new building in the general area of Stetson and Sawyer, thus forming a cluster.³ Like the new Stetson annex, this building will complement faculty offices with a lecture hall, seminar rooms, a small archaeology teaching laboratory, study areas for students, and flexibly designed work areas that can easily be reorganized to meet emerging needs for project spaces or tutorial classrooms. Our goal is to design a building that seamlessly integrates classrooms, student-faculty work areas, faculty offices, and IT resources to produce an optimal learning environment. Our estimate of the total size of the Stetson part of the project, including the new building or buildings, is 112,000 sq. ft., approximately 42,000 sq. ft. of which is renovation rather than new construction. (Square footage data for other buildings that currently house faculty to be moved into the Stetson addition/ renovation are presented in the Appendix, Table 1. The total Stetson estimate presented above does *not* include the approximately 8,000 net sq. ft. increase in IT space proposed in Table 10.)

The architectural firms interviewed by the committee have suggested several siting possibilities. A building could be nestled into the hillside to the south of Stetson. A different approach would be to construct a small Humanities Quadrangle between Sawyer and Lehman Hall. Whatever option the College ultimately pursues, it must be sensitive to issues of building scale and architectural context. When possible, new construction will take advantage of the site's steep grade to minimize its visual impact.

³ The number of faculty offices in this program, 185, is not the dramatic increase that it might seem. The project encompasses the 95 faculty offices in Stetson Hall as well as the approximately 30 offices of the Economics Department, currently in Seeley and Fernald, residential structures that are quite inadequate. The remaining offices include 15 for language faculty currently in Weston Hall and approximately 45 new offices that will accommodate emeritus faculty as well as new faculty hired as part of the expansion of the size of the College's teaching staff. Many of the latter are already housed in temporary facilities removed from their departments—e.g., a small group of offices at the corner of Main and Southworth, a space shared with Village Coifs. Roughly 20 faculty/staff offices in Stetson would be renovations of existing offices rather than new construction.

- Sawyer Library's needs are threefold. The most obvious is additional space for books and serial collections. We believe that a thoughtful internal reorganization can recapture internal spaces and put them to more efficient use. Possibilities include closing in the two exterior light wells and converting them to an interior atrium and stairwell, and installing tiers of high-density compact shelving in the building's lowest floor. Sawyer will also require internal reorganization to improve staff efficiency and the experience of library users. Such reorganization will involve internal construction but, we hope, only a modest amount of structural work.

The Sawyer mezzanine renovation, completed in 1991, created shelving space for ten years of growth, a term now completed. Although necessary, that project made interior navigation more difficult for users and removed seating in favor of collections. Even with the opening of the new Schow Science Library, the College's library holdings and available space remain modest when compared to those of peer institutions: Williams ranks only eighth out of twelve peer liberal-arts colleges in total library square footage, fifth in square footage per user, and sixth in total volumes and volumes per user. (See Appendix, Tables 4-9.)

The Library is meeting the challenge of continued growth in its holdings through new partnerships with regional library systems, facilitating the sharing of collections. We are also exploring off-site storage possibilities elsewhere in Williamstown and beyond. Although helpful, these strategies serve only to delay the inevitable expansion of Sawyer itself. We expect that a new addition on the order of 50,000 sq. ft. will be needed to meet the needs of the next 25 years.⁴ We are hopeful that this addition will allow the creation of a traditional reading room, an improved interior layout of services and collections, as well as new group study areas for students and perhaps a room of study carrels for faculty and visiting research scholars. Even with a Sawyer addition of this scale, which is smaller than recommended by the library consultant retained by the College in 2000, our square footage ranking will rise only to third among peer institutions.

The Sawyer renovation presents a golden opportunity to undo the building's awkward entryway. Discussions with architects suggest that we can create a new main entrance on the building's south side, allowing patrons to ascend a staircase and enter directly into the library's circulation and reference areas. This new entrance, which obviously requires sensitive design, will redefine Sawyer's public face in a more visually appealing way by breaking up the continuous south façade.

⁴ A detailed study of library space needs completed by consultant Jay Lucker in December 2000 suggested that approximately 68,000 sq. ft. would be needed to meet long term library needs. Mr. Lucker believes that an increasing substitution of electronic for paper journals and appropriate use of off-site storage would mean that this would be the last library addition that the college would have to construct. We now believe that more rapid implementation of an off-site storage policy allows us to reduce projected needs in Sawyer to approximately 50,000 sq. ft. Calculation of an exact figure awaits detailed discussions with the project architect.

- A mission-critical element of the Stetson-Sawyer project is Information Technology. Our goal is to have a conveniently located facility where students and faculty can learn to work with multimedia resources that now play a central role in the College's curriculum as well as in the professional lives of Williams graduates. Proximity to faculty offices and student study areas is necessary if these resources are to have the impact we seek. The IT center should have staff offices, a service desk, and project spaces where students and faculty can collaborate with resident OIT specialists. Such spaces must be flexibly designed so that OIT can respond to changing technology needs in the future. We expect to contain IT costs by having these facilities also serve Sawyer and other major consumers of technology resources. Planning of the OIT portion of the project awaits detailed conversations with the project architects and their technology consultants, but at this stage we estimate OIT's total space needs to be approximately 12,000 net sq. ft. When the project is completed, OIT will have a significant presence on the north side of the Williams campus and offer the kinds of resources and expertise that advance the work of the two-thirds of the College's faculty who will work in the Stetson-Sawyer precinct. (Details of proposed IT spaces in the Stetson-Sawyer project will be found in the Appendix, Table 10, as well as in a separate report to be submitted by OIT.)

- Four years of intense discussion have convinced us that the outdoor spaces surrounding Stetson and Sawyer should be treated as an integral part of the project rather than as an afterthought. This project will define much more sharply the east-west pedestrian axis that links Baxter Hall to Sawyer and Stetson, a change that follows recommendations made by Venturi Scott Brown at the conclusion of the recent campus-planning process. Additions and new construction will give this corner of the Williams campus a more urbanized quality that demands thoughtful attention to walkways, landscaping, parking, and the protection of sight-lines. We expect that some of the parking areas to the north and east of Stetson will be removed and replaced by a tiered parking structure tucked into the hillside behind Stetson Hall.

Final thoughts. Williams is an institution that encourages ambitious thinking, and it deserves facilities equal to its aspirations. The renovations and additions that we propose here advance the College's core mission by updating facilities for the Humanities and Social Sciences, as well as the library and IT resources that sustain them. The alternative is a cosmetic paint-and-paper response that ignores the increasingly urgent needs of the College's libraries and the 140 faculty members who today work in and around Stetson Hall.

We have already discussed with the Provost strategies for phasing construction and containing costs. We are prepared to work unstintingly to seek economies whenever they prove compatible with the project's goals. There is no question that it will be difficult to advance work of this magnitude in the face of economic uncertainty and on a

campus that by 2005 will be weary of construction-related inconveniences. We acknowledge the challenges but remain firm in our conviction that this rejuvenation of the College's intellectual heart should be designated a capital project of highest priority. ■

APPENDIX. CURRENT AND PROJECTED SPACE, STETSON-SAWYER PROJECT

Table 1. Office Component of Stetson

FACULTY OFFICES - EXISTING (Calc. Method= Drawbase area calc. By MZ)				
Name	Quantity	Description/Comments	Area n.s.f.	Total n.s.f.
Old Stetson	16	all 16 offices to remain; includes 2 chairpersons' offices	*150	2400
Stetson Office Addition	62	all 62 offices to be demolished and replaced		9300
Roper Offices	23	all 23 offices to be demolished and replaced	"	3450
Weston	18	all 18 offices to relocate to Stetson Sawyer site; includes 1 chairperson office and+ 1 shared office		2700
Fernald	15	all 15 offices to relocate to Stetson Sawyer site; includes 1 dept. chairperson office	"	2250
Seeley	7	all 7 offices to relocate to Stetson Sawyer site;	"	1050
Mason	4	all 4 offices to relocate to Stetson Sawyer site	"	600
Subtotal Existing**	145			21,750
FACULTY OFFICES – PROPOSED				
Subtotal Proposed	185	Existing + 40 new offices	150	***27,750
Net Gain Faculty Offices				6,000
* 150 n.s.f. is an average for all offices				
** Does not include temporary faculty offices@ Harper, Mears West, and Mather House				
*** Supercedes CBT total of 28,650				

Table 2. Chapin Library & Archives/Spec. Collections Component of Stetson

CHAPIN + ARCHIVES - EXISTING (Calculation method = Drawbase area calc. By MZ)				
Name	Quantity	Description/Comments	Area n.s.f.	Total n.s.f.
Chapin Lib.Main Room	1	floor 2	2230	2230
Chapin Mezzanine	1	floor 3	1215	1215
Chapin Staff Off.	2	floor 2 - area included in Lib.Main Room	x x x	x x x
Chapin Performing Arts Collection	1	floor 1	935	935
Chapin Performing Arts Collection + Storage	1	floor 1 - area included in Per. Arts Collection	x x x	x x x
Chapin Conservation Lab	1	floor 1 - area included in Per. Arts Collection	x x x	x x x
Chapin Seminar	1	floor 1 - area included in Per. Arts Collection	x x x	x x x
Chapin Storeroom	1	floor 4 - attic	208	208
Archives and Spec. Collection Rm.	1	floor 1	907	907
Archives Office (Sylvia K.Brown)	1	floor 1	130	130
Archives + Spec.Coll.Vault	1	floor B	208	208
Archives + Spec.Coll.Vault	2	lower level	72	72
Whiteman Collection	4	level B in Stetson Office Addition	1005	1005
Stacks	5	5 floors of stacks (Archives + Chapin)*	1666 ea. fl.	8330
Subtotal**				15,240
Subtotal Proposed***		existing + bldg.additions		26,520
Net Gain, Chapin & Archives				11,280

*3.5 floors = Archives, 1.5 floors = Chapin, 4.0 floors = Sawyer

**supercedes CBT total of 13,250

***CBT total adjusted to include 15,240 subtotal

Table 3. Classroom Component of Stetson

CLASSROOMS - EXISTING (Calc. method = CBT spreadsheet)				
Name	Quantity	Description/Comments	Area n.s.f.	Total n.s.f.
Preston Room	1	Existing to remain in Old Stetson	352	352
d27	1	to be demolished and replaced (Stetson Office Add'tn.)	375	375
#201	1	to be demolished and replaced (Stetson Office Add'tn.)	240	240
#301	1	to be demolished and replaced (Stetson Office Add'tn.)	374	374
CLASSROOMS - WESTON RELOCATED (Calc. Method - CBT spreadsheet)				
Language C.R.	1	40 students	456	456
Language C.R.	1	20-25 students	1066	1066
Language C.R.	1	20 students	476	476
Language seminar rooms	2	15 students	228	456
Language lab	1		1107	1107
Subtotal existing + Weston relocated				4,902
CLASSROOMS - PROPOSED (Calc. method - CBT spreadsheet)				
Seminar Room	2	28-40 students	1225	2450
High Tech Lecture Hall	2	40-60 students	1225	2450
Archeology Lab	2		330	660
Subtotal existing + Weston relocated				4902
Subtotal proposed				10,462
Net Gain Classrooms				5,560

Table 4. Library Holdings and Library Space, Liberal-Arts Comparison Group

College	Students and Faculty	Gross Sq Ft	Sq Ft per User	Volumes	Vols per User	Vols/ Sq Ft	Percent in Off-Site	Percent Off-Site Occupied
Amherst	1,822	162,315	89.09	938,983	515	5.78	12	63
Bowdoin	1,751	120,675	68.92	931,983	532	7.72	4	not avail
Bryn Mawr	1,857	146,271	78.77	846,675	456	5.79	--	--
Middlebury	2,470	172,300	69.76	644,178	261	3.74	--	--
Mt. Holyoke	2,390	95,000	39.75	703,000	294	7.40	--	--
Oberlin	3,170	174,180	54.95	1,254,218	396	7.20	21	75
Smith	3,618	285,800	78.99	1,268,443	351	4.44	6	70
Swarthmore	1,594	111,673	70.06	731,210	459	6.55	--	--
Vassar	2,615	180,000	68.83	821,929	314	4.57	25	99
Wellesley	2,448	250,000	102.12	781,727	319	3.13	10	leased
Wesleyan	3,568	169,900	47.62	1,216,147	341	7.16	10	110
Williams	2,281	162,115	62.32	872,025	382	6.13	4	90
AVERAGE	2,465	169,186	70	917,543	385	5.74	--	--

Table 5. Peer Ranking, Total Square Footage of Library Space in Liberal-Arts Comparison Group

Institution	Total Sq. Ft.
Smith	285,800
Wellesley	250,000
Vassar	180,000
Oberlin	174,180
Middlebury	172,300
Wesleyan	169,900
Amherst	162,315
Williams	162,115
Bryn Mawr	146,271
Bowdoin	120,675
Swarthmore	111,673
Mt. Holyoke	95,000

Table 6. Peer Ranking, Square Footage per User, Liberal-Arts Comparison Group

Institution	Sq Footage/User
Wellesley	102.12
Amherst	89.09
Smith	78.99
Bryn Mawr	78.77
Williams	71.07
Swarthmore	70.06
Middlebury	69.76
Bowdoin	68.92
Vassar	68.83
Oberlin	54.95
Wesleyan	47.62
Mt. Holyoke	39.75

Table 7. Peer ranking, Total Volumes, Liberal-Arts Comparison Group

Institution	Total Volumes
Smith	1,268,443
Oberlin	1,254,218
Wesleyan	1,216,147
Amherst	938,983
Bowdoin	931,983
Williams	872,025
Bryn Mawr	846,675
Vassar	821,929
Wellesley	781,727
Swarthmore	731,210
Mt. Holyoke	703,000
Middlebury	644,178

Table 8. Peer ranking, Volumes per User, Liberal-Arts Comparison Group

Institution	Vols/User
Bowdoin	532
Amherst	515
Swarthmore	459
Bryn Mawr	456
Oberlin	396
Williams	382
Smith	351
Wesleyan	341
Wellesley	319
Vassar	314
Mt. Holyoke	294
Middlebury	261

Table 9. Peer Ranking, Volumes per Square Foot, Liberal-Arts Comparison Group

Institution	Vols/Sq Ft
Bowdoin	7.72
Mt. Holyoke	7.40
Oberlin	7.20
Wesleyan	7.16
Swarthmore	6.55
Bryn Mawr	5.79
Amherst	5.78
Williams	5.38
Vassar	4.57
Smith	4.44
Middlebury	3.74
Wellesley	3.13

Table 10. IT Space Proposal, Stetson-Sawyer Project

Stetson Technology Center Space Proposal			
		Net Sq Ft	Notes
Staff			
Office space for 12 employees (10X14)	140 each	1680	
Office space for 2-3 Directors (20X14) (need meeting space)	280 each	840	
Clerical support space and file cabinets		120	
Conference room for 15-20 -- could also have video-conferencing equipment		600	
Proximity and access to a coffee/kitchenette area shared by local faculty and staff.		0	Unless coffee area / kitchenette is far away.
Small lounge / lunch area		600	
Teaching assistant area for media lab student workers.		200	
Copier, printers, mail room, etc.		150	
Staging area for incoming equipment prior to deployment.		140	
Service			
Lobby with service desk, email stations and information terminals		300	
10 Email stations		0	If located in hall or Nearby.
Training room / (lab after hours) -- could also have videoconferencing equipment	20 stations	900	
Service desk		0	If part of lobby.
Area for support activities with Desktop Systems (15X15)		225	
Loaner equipment distribution and storage	150 storage/ 20 distribution	170	
Utility/storage area		225	

Work space for faculty and students			
Collaborative computing area with project rooms of various sizes (6 rooms for 3-4 persons / 2 rooms for 6-8 persons)	6 X 200 2 X 300	1800	
Specialty lab(s) including graphics, multi-media editing and support for languages	30 stations peripherals printers	2400	
Development areas	use project rooms or of- fices	0	
Open faculty work area for high tech multimedia work	use specialty lab	0	
Audio and video editing spaces		200	
Audio and video production studios with shared control room		400	
General computing area (small portion of room)		0	
Space for CTAH		1000	
			Estimated GSF
Total for proposed Stetson Technology Center		11,950	18,000
Total OIT space currently in Stetson		1,960	
Total OIT space programmed by CBT/Barr & Barr		3,960	
Net increase beyond CBT program		7,990	