

Eden Hall Campus

The vision moves forward

BY AMANDA LEFF RITCHIE

Just a little more than four years ago, Chatham University received an extraordinary gift from the Eden Hall Foundation. It encompassed much more than the nearly 400 acres of land that once served as a farm and retreat for women workers from the Heinz company and others.

Beyond the beautiful land in Richland Township now known as Eden Hall Campus, Chatham received the opportunity to dream big. At the groundbreaking ceremony at Eden Hall on October 11, President Esther L. Barazzone, Ph.D., described how Chatham is transforming its dreams into exciting reality at the new campus:

“Eden Hall is a campus like no other – a next-generation living laboratory where students will not only study sustainability, but be immersed in it,” President Barazzone said upon announcing the groundbreaking celebration. “This remarkable campus will be a model of advanced sustainability, a place of stunning beauty, and will strengthen Pittsburgh’s continued leadership in green innovation and buildings.”

In front of a large mound of dirt and a row of shiny shovels and hard hats, President Barazzone told members of the Chatham community

and representatives from the civic, foundation, corporate, and Richland communities, “Here, we will come to understand how we can work more harmoniously with nature in the future while also trying to create a better world for all its occupants. We are working here to develop a new citizenship model, which will affect not only how we live on and with this land, but how we live with those who already live here: the residents of this part of Allegheny County and its surrounding area.”

The \$40 million initial phase of Eden Hall represents the first academic community in the world built from the ground up for sustainable development, living, and learning. The initial stage of construction, scheduled to be complete by fall 2013, includes the development of field labs, classrooms, a café, an amphitheater, a mosaic garden, and infrastructure. A commons (dining hall) and two residence halls supporting 150 beds are scheduled for completion in 2015.

David Goldberg and Sandy Mendler of Mithun and President Esther L. Barazzone celebrate the groundbreaking at Eden Hall Campus. The \$40 million initial phase of construction represents the first academic community in the world built from the ground up for sustainable development, living, and learning.





S. Murray Rust, III, chair of Chatham's Board of Trustees, was one of the speakers at the ceremony. He and his wife Shirley are among the generous donors who have supported the vision of Eden Hall Campus.

“We are part of a new movement that is asking questions about how cities can better feed themselves with local foods; how land can not just be protected from damage, but restored; how sewage and water cleaning can be done in harmony with nature, rather than with mechanical technologies that erode and spew poisonous waste into our waterways; and finally, how all human beings can prosper without damaging some of our species or nature,” continued President Barazzone.

The campus will ultimately serve more than 1,500 students in a carbon and water resources neutral, zero-net energy integrated facility and will feature high-performance green buildings and the latest in sustainable land, energy, and water management techniques. By protecting valuable watersheds, incorporating surrounding land and agricultural resources, and rehabilitating existing farm structures alongside developing new, green buildings, Eden Hall will be a one-of-a-kind venue for education, conferences, community outreach, and ecotourism in Pittsburgh's North Hills.

To realize its ambitious vision for Eden Hall, Chatham hired world-renowned leaders in sustainable planning, architecture, and design including, BNIM and Andropogon to develop the campus master plan and the architecture firm Mithun for the first phase of development.

David Goldberg, president of Mithun, flew in from Seattle to participate in the celebration. “This campus is a game changer,” he said. “A game changer for how we design, how we build, and how we can live in harmony with a beautiful piece of land with a beautiful history. Not simply by preserving the land, but by harnessing it to generate energy; clean water; grow food; strengthen habitats; and, most importantly, educate and inspire a new crop of innovative leaders for countless growing seasons to come.”

Eden Hall will be only the second residential college campus in the North Hills and the first university campus in northern Allegheny County. In addition to serving as the home of the School of Sustainability and the Environment (SSE) with a focus on sustainability research and education, a range of online, low-residency, and continuing education programs across a variety of topics and majors will be offered at Eden Hall beginning in 2013.

As part of the groundbreaking ceremony, Chatham announced the receipt of a \$7.5 million gift from the Richard King Mellon Foundation for Eden Hall, the largest contribution to date since the original land gift by the Eden Hall Foundation. Since 2008, approximately \$28.6 million has been raised for the comprehensive sustainability project, consisting of approximately \$14.1 million for construction and approximately \$14.5 million for planning, academic development, and programming.



David Hassenzahl, dean of the SSE, also addressed the guests at the groundbreaking. “As we build and live at this campus, we will try out new practices,” he said. “We will constantly and consciously learn not just about technology, but about how people use and live with that technology. We will share what we learn – how, for example, to build water management systems that cost less, require less ongoing maintenance, treat nutrients as a resource rather than waste, and don’t burden already limited utilities.”

Graduate and undergraduate students in the SSE are equipped to solve complex, real-world challenges through immersion in a range of topics, including food studies, sustainable agriculture, ecology, energy and water management, social and economic issues, and the business of sustainability. Students, faculty, and other researchers will develop and model sustainable design, technologies, and practices to replicate in communities everywhere. Students will also have opportunities to take what they learn and apply it on a global scale through study-abroad opportunities and partnerships with international universities.

“Students from many Chatham programs – those who are with us today and those who will learn and live here in the future – will be ambassadors for those better ways of living. They are already imagining and dreaming. They will create solutions, they will live solutions, they will share solutions,” said David.

Tony Miga, a student in the inaugural cohort of the SSE Master of Sustainability program, spoke at the ceremony on behalf of the other students. “As a cohort, my 12 colleagues and I represent a wide range of interests, backgrounds, and experiences. We are geologists, photographers, engineers, and even river guides. Collectively, however, we share a passion for the environment, a commitment to social justice, and the entrepreneurial spirit necessary to succeed.



The initial stage of construction consists of the development of a café (shown above), field labs, classrooms, an amphitheater, a mosaic garden, and infrastructure to be complete by fall 2013.

“This pioneering spirit is shared and fostered by an incredibly talented faculty,” he continued. “Even in just the few short months we’ve been here, each of our professors have established themselves as caring, committed teachers and have supported our goals, challenged our assumptions, advanced our knowledge, and listened to our comments.

“When you look around this campus, it is easy to get excited about the foundation that we are laying today. It’s also inspiring to know that by supporting this campus, you are choosing to make a profound difference – right now, right here – in the lives and development of others. On behalf of my colleagues, my professors, this community: Thank you.”

In addition to strengthening Chatham and elevating international awareness of the University, Eden Hall Campus will be a place where ideas are generated that will contribute to a brighter, healthier future for everyone. Eden Hall stands as a testament to the fact that Chatham University doesn’t just believe in sustainability – it lives it. 🌱



School of Sustainability and the Environment faculty, staff, and students take part in the groundbreaking festivities.