

Potential move in the works for Renaissance College

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Renaissance College offers students the opportunity to study philosophy and leadership in depth – and soon the faculty could become further integrated with the UNB campus.

There are roughly 70 students currently attending Renaissance College, with 25 students admitted per year. Classes and some students are housed in Maggie Jean Chestnut House, a renovated 1895 Victorian mansion on nearby Charlotte Street.

Discussions have arisen in recent weeks due to what UNB's VP Academic, Anthony Secco, calls the "tremendous success" of Renaissance College. Consultations began last week regarding a potential move for Renaissance College from its current location to campus.

Secco says that one of the key reasons for this potential move is the leadership program of the college. The program focuses on social issues and public policy and seeks to educate students into leaders. It also involves intensive hands-on research and community internships.

The VP Academic says that other students may be able to benefit from Renaissance College's leadership courses if they were made more accessible.

"One of the aspects of Renaissance College and its leadership, and what leadership can do if infused into other programs within the campus," says Secco.

He notes that before he obtained his position this year, there was already talk of how Renaissance College could be better placed on campus, as opposed to existing solely off campus.

Secco recently commissioned Pierre Zundel, Dean of Renaissance College, to examine spaces on campus to house some of Renaissance College's programs and resources.

"Before any kind of move can be contemplated you have to know what



Andrew Meade / The Brunswickan

Renaissance College, which accepts 25-30 students a year into its three year B.Phil. program, is located at Maggie Jean Chestnut House off of the UNB campus. The UNB administration is currently looking at a move for portions of the college to become more integrated with the rest of campus.

it is you need and what space would be appropriate," says Secco.

The VP Academic says that there is no definite area in the minds of administration for an on-campus Renaissance College location. He also mentioned that discussion has yet to occur regarding the fate of Maggie Jean Chestnut House.

In recent years, campus space has been rededicated to other pursuits, such as Jones House, which is being converted to a Student Services building. Secco is still unsure about whether or not Renaissance College's space on campus will occupy a residence.

"Where space exists, we have to look at an appropriate use of it and sometimes it's a matter of, I'm sure you're familiar with, the domino effect. You push one and they all fall down," says Secco.

"Residences are in that mix, but obviously residences were built for residents and that's a primary focus, but I don't think it's any secret that we have not filled our residences with residents."

Matt Abbott, the Renaissance College representative for the Student Union, has mixed emotions about such a drastic change being made to his faculty. He noted that one of the opportunities Renaissance College students have is to

be taught in a class with only 20 to 25 other students, an opportunity that may be lost if the college were to transition.

He also says that the communal living environment benefits their learning experience.

"It allows us to develop a level of trust that lets us really sort of push the envelope at times, and so in a different space, sort of in a more traditional academic space, some of that could be more challenging."

"They could also create a space that facilitates some of those things better, it's hard to say."

The ongoing consultations about

Renaissance College are not due to a shrinking number of interested students. Secco believes that the College is at a point of maturation and can connect not only through programs, but physically on the campus. He also states why he believes this is a necessary transition.

"On the programmatic side, it's how to connect leadership programming with existing programming and that's really an exciting opportunity, and discussions are taking place and meeting with positive response," says the administration's VP Academic. "And then physically, to be proximal, as opposed to being distal."

Students react to Obama's inauguration

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"Obama-mania" swept across the United States during last week's Presidential Inauguration. Much of the inauguration hype also crept north of the border, and UNB was of no exception. In Marshall d'Avray Hall, a large projector displayed President Obama's Inauguration speech for a crowd of about 70 people. Across campus several students skipped class to watch the festivities, and some professors played the speech live for those students that did show up for class.

Much interest was displayed by students on the matter.

"I think that he's going to be good for their country. Even if he doesn't solve all of their problems, I think that he has a way with the people that makes them feel like there's hope for the future," said fourth year biology major Laura Bursey.

"He's just a really good public speaker, and I think that he's going to do the best job that he can over his four years in office."

It was President Obama's public speaking that was on display at last week's Inauguration, and across campus UNB students were glued to their televisions and computers to hear what he would say.

"Our professor wanted us to watch it online, but there was too many people watching and it was lagging," explained fourth year multimedia student Rodney Mann in reference to CNN's record-setting Internet stream. "So we ended up listening to it on the radio."

The presidential supporters were out in full force in Washington for the Inauguration. They filled the grounds of the White House. "I saw the satellite pictures and there was a ton of people there," continued Mann. "They kind of looked like ants."

CNN's online stream set a record for the most watched event on live Internet, but the sheer volume of people watching caused some issues and many people were left without a feed.

"I watched what I could, I had class at the same time but I managed to catch parts of it," said engineering student Nick Walker. "I think that he looks to be a very nice guy and he sure has a lot of support in the US."

But the spectacle didn't stop after the speech, and it was the huge parties

afterwards that caught many students' attention.

"I watched a little bit of it when they replayed it later that night, and I watched all of the partying and stuff that happened after," said Laura Bursey.

"I feel like it was a very elaborate party, and I'm kind of interested to see how much they spent on it," said Mann. "Cause it sure seems like a lot of money to be spending in an economic crisis."

"I didn't really watch a lot of (the Inauguration), but I did see him on Oprah," said chemical engineering student Vicky Knott.

Where the Barack Obama celebrity stops, and the Barack Obama presidency begins, seems to be a point of contention for many students at UNB. Many seem to be questioning whether his promises were merely just posturing for support and popularity.

"I guess I feel like he's appealing to feelings," explained Mann. "I think that if people saw the debt that (the US) will go into if he follows through with all of his proposed spending, they would see that things are going to get pretty bad."

"I think he has a lot to live up to," said Jodie Boone. "He's come in at such a bad time and there's a lot of pressure for him to turn things around really fast. I think it will be hard for a lot of people to



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Barack Obama was inaugurated as the 44th president of the United States on Tuesday, Jan. 20 to captive audiences in Washington and on the internet.

like him if he doesn't turn things around quite quickly."

The UNB campus, however, seems to have plenty of supporters. Some students are happy that change is in the works, and they see hope for the future in both Canada and the US.

"My personal opinion is that he seems like a really great guy and I think he's

going to make a change for the better," said Nick Walker. "Canada always seems to follow whatever the USA does. So I think that the US will set some examples with Obama and Canada will follow in their footsteps."

"I think it's great that there's an African-American president," concluded Knott.