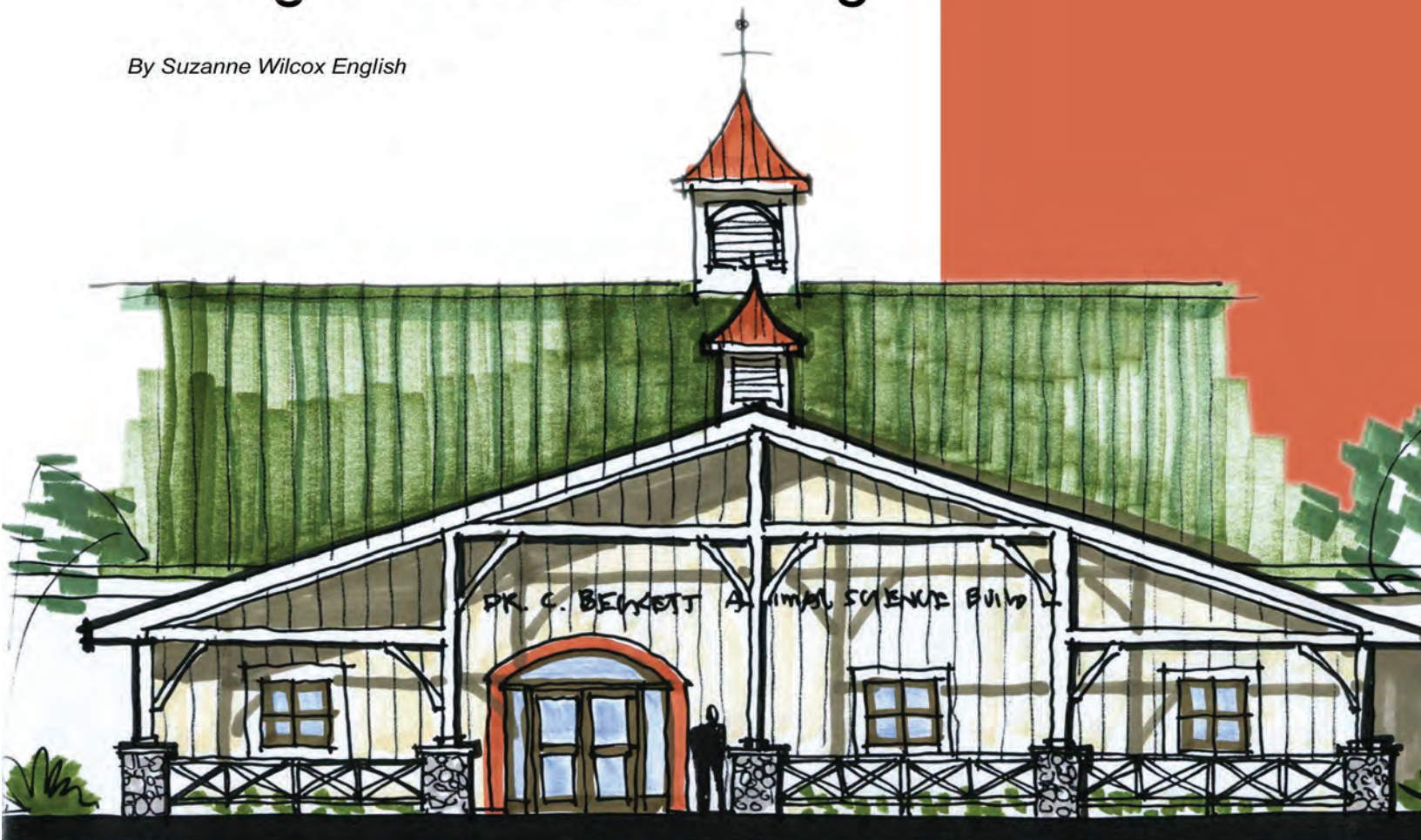


Pre-Vet Program looks ahead to a “Magnificent Building”

By Suzanne Wilcox English



Students in The University of Findlay’s pre-veterinary program will study and learn in one of the finest academic program facilities anywhere in the country. Students aren’t the only ones who can’t wait.

“This is going to be a magnificent building. I’m extremely excited about it,” said C. Michael Kerns, D.V.M., professor of animal science.

“It will be a modern facility with academic facilities at the forefront,” Kerns said. The plans call for a 31,000-square-foot building, the main area being a rectangular barn, 100 feet wide by 170 feet long, with demonstration areas and bleachers at each end for improved teaching potential. The building will be constructed on 80 acres of

recently purchased farmland adjacent to the western equestrian farm on State Route 68.

At the front, directly off the entranceway, will be the academic component, which will include two classrooms, each seating 50 students, with a middle divider that can be removed to double the available space for large presentations.

The side of the barn nearest the entrance will include a heated surgery room, faculty offices, laboratory, pharmacy, student locker rooms, restrooms and a student lounge. It will also feature a walk-in refrigerator and freezer to allow for demonstrations during food production classes, a farrowing pen, nursery, utility room, wash racks, poultry room and hay storage.

The central area will offer sheep and cattle working areas — including a cattle chute that will allow the students to learn how to work the chute as well as the processes it enables, such as vaccinating, deworming and ear tagging. It will also include a series of pens that can be turned into a single pen, two or four pens easily through the use of gates. Concrete aisles large enough to drive a tractor through will allow for easy feeding and cleaning, as well.

The other side will be a series of inside pens with gates leading to enclosed, blacktopped turn-out pens, which in turn will have gates leading into 40 acres of pasture.

“I like to think of it as a user-friendly facility — not just for animals, but also for people,” Kerns said.

C. Richard Beckett, D.V.M., chair of the Board of Trustees and the prime mover behind the

establishment of the pre-veterinary program, will be honored by having the new Dr. C. Richard Beckett Animal Science Building named after him, while both Kerns and Linda Peck, D.V.M., will be recognized by having the teaching area named the Peck-Kerns Academic Wing.

Construction is slated to be complete during the spring 2009 semester, but one of the challenges has been going from

concept to reality on a new type of building.

“It’s a big challenge for people who are used to commercial buildings. Nobody’s ever built a building like this before, a barn with a classroom component,” Kerns said, admitting it’s his “dream facility. It’s going to create excitement, lots of excitement.”

“The animal-to-student ratio will be much better,” he said. “More numbers give students a better chance to learn what is normal for an animal. You have to know what normal is before you know what’s abnormal.”

While the program has produced excellent results, the new facility will be a great improvement for the animals, offering a drier environment with better air flow. “Where they are now is a historical building — it’s a bank barn, and local officials wanted to preserve it,” he explained.

“If you have animals that are calm, they produce better,” he said, adding that he believes the young will require less work to be gentle and ready for handling. “The concept here is to think like the animal you’re handling.”

The new building will serve as the centerpiece for future enhancements to the property that will make it a national equestrian and animal science showcase.

Visitors and prospective students will have the opportunity to view several species. “You will have all the different species under one roof. Visitors will be able to see what we’ve got with one stop. Hopefully, it will be the envy of the nation,” he said with a smile.

