

# From Classrooms to Learning Spaces

BY CHERRYL JENSEN



## PETROCELLI HALL DEDICATION TO BE HELD OCTOBER 16

The completion of Petrocelli Hall is ahead of schedule and interior finish-work is being carried out in preparation for a scheduled opening on August 15. Furniture has been ordered for delivery in July and all details are in place meet the University's commitment to begin utilizing this new teaching and learning space for the Fall Semester.

A formal dedication ceremony and building tour will take place on Thursday, October 16 to kick off Alumni and Reunion Weekend. All are invited to celebrate this major milestone in advancing the academic resources of the University. Watch for more information at [www.franklinpiercedu](http://www.franklinpiercedu)

Everyone knows what a classroom should look like. Right? The professor at the head of the room, facing a line-up of students sitting in one-armed desks taking notes. Bright fluorescent lights. A white pull-down screen at the front of the room.

Not anymore, says Gerald Burns, professor of English at Franklin Pierce. "The traditional notion of the classroom reflects an instruction-centered approach to education," he says, "with the professor 'feeding' content to students and closely managing the teaching and learning process. That model has been challenged in recent years by a learning-centered approach in which students engage in active exploration and collaboration with each other, as well as with the professor."

As a result, Burns says, the traditional classroom is being reconceived as a "learning space." Thanks to work by a group of Franklin Pierce faculty and staff led by Burns, one space in the new Petrocelli Hall academic building is being designed to reflect these ideals.

The group worked with architect and educational consultant William Dittoe, a leader in the design of learning-centered environments. The new space will accommodate the most recent research that indicates students learn better in active, exploratory and social settings.

The multi-use classroom will include modular furniture – tables and chairs that can be easily reconfigured to accommodate different types of classes and learning activities.

It also will include the latest technology – wireless computer access, a computer screen and projector, a DVD player, cameras – all controlled wirelessly through a tablet PC.

However, the classroom is not designed around the technology, Burns hastens to point out. "This is not a technology classroom with all the latest gadgets," he says. "The technology is designed to be in the background and to facilitate learning."

In fact, the whole point of the new classroom design, Burns says, is to focus on and support the underlying philosophy of Franklin Pierce University – that learning is at its center.

"Classrooms convey an image of an institution's philosophy about teaching and learning," Burns says. "The way they are designed and used can have a major impact on supporting and encouraging learning." 