On a chilly November evening, Elaine Deutch, Cedar Crest College’s executive vice president for finance and administration, was dashing across the Lehigh Valley to Bethlehem, where she was a guest at the Associated Builders and Contractors’ Awards Dinner — an annual awards event that showcases some of the best construction projects in the area. The invitation would not have been thinkable less than a year ago. For Deutch was invited on behalf of a local construction company, Miller, Miller & McLachlan, Inc., who was picking up an award that evening for their participation in renovating the College’s newest building — 2901 Hamilton Boulevard — a project that was completed only months before and a property the College had only owned for less than a year. A full-page ad on the back of the awards program thanked the College for being an “award-winning client.” But through her role at the College, and as someone who worked daily with the contractors, banks, architects and others to make the building a reality, Deutch is perhaps the only one who understood at that evening’s event how the Hamilton Boulevard Building — a project that seemed to happen overnight — was really one more than two decades in the making. (continued)

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Annexing the Past to Build the Future

Through the purchase and renovation of the former Veteran’s Administration Clinic on Hamilton Boulevard, Cedar Crest College rejoins a piece of real estate to the College campus and builds a state-of-the-art classroom facility for the 21st century.
OPENING DOORS

Earlier this fall, the College hosted a series of events in the new Hamilton Boulevard Building — welcoming Trustees, city leaders, alumnae and friends of the College to view the facility for the first time. Nearly everyone had a sense of amazement in the room as, one by one, guests filtered into Hamilton (nicknamed HBB) and marveled at the transformation that had taken place.

For only five months earlier, the building was a mess. Carpets and walls were darkened and dirty. The ceiling tiles were covered in dust and the building looked shabby, and to the unimaginative eye, it was difficult to anticipate how the College could effectively use the property.

“The transformation is incredible. The building today doesn’t resemble what the College purchased,” says Deutch.

“Walking into this facility at the beginning of this process, you needed imagination to envision what it has become and what it means to the College now.”

At 33,000 square feet, the Hamilton Boulevard Building serves the entire campus with new state-of-the-art classrooms. Were it not for various tenants – dissolved into a messy maze of office and common space. By all accounts, the building looked shabby and to the unimaginative eye, it was difficult to anticipate how the College could effectively use the property.

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At 33,000 square feet, the Hamilton Boulevard Building (a non-descript name the College adapted as it looks for donors to lend their) serves the entire student body with state-of-the art classrooms. It also consolidates Cedar Crest’s nursing program – currently the largest academic program on campus – into one place. Previously, students and staff in the program were scattered across the campus, with faculty often doubling up offices, and with key nursing labs located on opposite ends of campus with several in Butz Hall and others in the Miller Family Building.

This summer, a multi-million dollar renovation process began at the facility, the site of the former Hamilton Professional Center and, before that, the Veteran’s Administration Clinic.

The building contains the office of human resources; three state-of-the-art, multimedia nursing labs, including a health assessment room, a maternal and pediatric lab, and an adult health room; a fully equipped, 10-bed nursing unit that simulates a hospital environment; a SimMan center, with two adjacent SimMan laboratories, separated by a control/observation room, with two computer stations; a community health lab set up to replicate a home-care environment; six classrooms/meeting spaces for use by all programs of study, four of which are separated with movable panels to allow the space to be altered to fit a variety of sizes of audiences depending on need, a computer lab, two student lounges, and a faculty lounge; and offices for all nursing faculty.

Buying the building benefits the college community by adding much needed high-tech, flexible classroom space for the campus. It provides privacy to the office of human resources and adds more than 136 parking spaces to Cedar Crest at a time when parking is at a premium.

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LOOKING BACK TO LOOK AHEAD

Back in the mid-1970s when the College finances looked particularly bleak, the Trustees and then president Pauline Tompkins opted to sell some of the acreage fronting Hamilton Boulevard to raise money for needed building projects including the Tompkins College Center. Shortly thereafter, the Veteran’s Administration Clinic and the Atrium Professional Building sprang up on this land on the campus periphery — serving as an unexpected buffer from the College to the highway.

Ironically, Allentown Attorney, Robert J. Johnson, currently a vice chair of Cedar Crest College Trustees, performed work three decades ago that led the College to bringing the land back to campus today. In the original sale agreement, Johnson had outlined a clause that would allow Cedar Crest College the first right of refusal on any subsequent sale of the property.

“When Bob Johnson came up for sale, the owners had to approach us first. It was at a time when we realized the need for additional space on campus and this was a great solution. To build a facility of this size from scratch would have taken an extraordinary amount of time and resources. This was a win-win situation for the College.”

But it wasn’t easy. When the College acquired the building at the end of 2006 there were obstacles. Aside from the condition of the building, there were
The building that would house the nursing department administrative offices. At the same time, the acting provost, Roxanne Amico, and acting president, Dr. Carol Pulham held formal and informal discussions with various constituencies on campus to determine the best uses for the building. They worked with the faculty, administration and physical plant to discuss the College’s most pressing spatial needs.

After looking at all the possibilities one option became clear — if the College could consolidate the nursing department (currently the area with the largest total student enrollment) the positive ripple effect it could have on the rest of the campus would be extraordinary.

‘Since the implementation of the year-round nursing program in 2001, the program has more than doubled in size!’

‘Since the implementation of the year-round nursing program in spring 2001, the program has more than doubled in size and achieved great academic success,’ says Dr. Laurie Murray, Chair of Nursing.

The addition of this facility to our campus consolidates the program under one roof and offers a state-of-the-art educational environment for nursing students. It also provides much-needed classroom, office and meeting spaces for the entire college community. This consolidation also allows other academic departments to gain space that is very valuable to their programs.”

THE RIPPLE EFFECT

As a result of the consolidation, prized space became available in Miller, Oberkotter, Pool Science, Lees and Butz halls for use, not only by other academic departments, but also by student groups. The forensic science program gained a laboratory for the master’s program, which launched earlier this year. Graduate students were able to develop office space and a graduate lounge. The chemical and physical sciences expanded from cramped quarters in Pool Science Center allowing faculty, who once shared offices, to be able to have private space for academic advising of students. The athletic department was able to reclaim needed office space. Through the Student Government Association students were invited to develop a plan for the former Nursing Learning Resource Center in Butz. They are currently finalizing a proposal that at this writing would allow for additional space for “The Crestiad” student newspaper, the student-run radio station WCCC, SGA meeting space and an expanded student lounge area.

Perhaps, most importantly, all the academic disciplines on campus gained much needed classroom space in the new Hamilton Boulevard Building, as several multiple use classrooms were developed to handle classes of various sizes and formats.

At a reception for Trustees in HBB earlier in October, former President Sherman paused to thank those who were essential to the building opening on time — and her list was substantial. Trustee David Jaindl used his expertise to look past the building’s sad shape and assess its true value to the college during a pre-purchase walk-through. Wayne Batten Architects took the building’s shell and came up with an architectural plan for the building renovation. Miller, Miller and McLaughlin served as the building contractor overseeing the project. Marstellar took control over the HVAC redesign and the building’s technology features to keep down the costs. His team also took on the project of building a bridge that allows travel to the building during the rainstorms that sometimes flood the area between the campuses.

“It takes a lot of support to make great things happen,” says Cynthia Bland, chairwoman of the board. “The Hamilton Boulevard Building is a testament to the extraordinary spirit I have found here at Cedar Crest. I think this project only signals the start of many great things to come.”

Since the implementation of the year-round nursing program in 2001, the program has more than doubled in size. Cedar Crest College | 27

A class in one of the Center’s four lecture halls.