



Contact: Yolanda Conrad
City of Fayetteville Public Information Office
433 Hay Street
Fayetteville, NC 28301
Tel: 910.433.1753
FAX: 910.433.1752

News Release

Groundbreaking ceremony held for new FSU fire station

Community leaders and officials from the City of Fayetteville and Fayetteville State University attended the groundbreaking ceremony today for Fire Station No. 14 at 632 Langdon St. Construction is scheduled to be completed by October.

The new \$3.3 million fire station is part of a collaborative effort between the city and FSU, a historically black university. The 18,000-square-foot station will be located adjacent to the FSU campus and will serve as a residence for interns completing their fire science degree. FSU students will train, attend classes and receive hands-on training from firefighters at the station.

The 12-week internship is part of a new fire science curriculum FSU is developing. Once the Board of Governors approves the curriculum, FSU officials hope to have students enrolled in the fire science program in January 2006, according to Juliette Bell, dean of FSU's College of Basic and Applied Sciences.

“We are very excited about this program,” Bell said. “We hope to prepare students for a career in fire services. This is a wonderful opportunity for the community and the university.”

FSU also plans to offer its fire science program online, which will enable current city firefighters to further their education and advance into senior management positions within the fire department.

“This partnership is a win-win situation for FSU students, for residents who live in this area and for the Fayetteville Fire Department,” said City Council member D.J. Haire, who represents District 4 of the city – the district in which the new fire station will be located.

The new station and the fire science program meet several of the city’s needs, according to the city’s Fire Chief Benny Nichols.

“There was an overwhelming need for a fire station in the FSU area, there was an overwhelming need to develop a career-mentoring program for women and minorities, and there was an overwhelming need for the fire department to recruit, train and maintain minority firefighters,” Nichols said. “This partnership addresses all of those issues.”

The fire chief served as a facilitator during a Study Circles session in the late-1990s during which the idea for this program was born. The Human Relations Commission of

Fayetteville-Cumberland County established the Study Circles program as a means for focus groups -- made up of city and county leaders and residents-- to study Fayetteville's race relations. The group makes recommendations with the goal of having those recommendations become part of programs and policies for the betterment of the city. One of the recommendations made in late-1990 was to create a career-mentoring program for minorities through the schools. By 1999, the City of Fayetteville and FSU began laying the foundation for this partnership.

"This program is proof that local residents can make a difference in our community by getting involved and being willing to be advocates for change," said Ron McElrath, director of The Human Relations Department of Fayetteville-Cumberland County, which works with the Human Relations Commission to improve the quality of life in Fayetteville.

"This initiative celebrates the diversity and the uniqueness of our great city," said Mayor Marshall B. Pitts, Jr. "This program is a powerful example of what can happen when residents and local government move from words to action."