

# THE VANCOUVER SUN

## IMAGES

### UBC 'diamond' a hit with students: Plain exterior belies 'superior' high-tech merger of classrooms, research facilities

Vancouver Sun  
 Thursday, November 4, 2004  
 Page: B1 / FRONT  
 Section: Westcoast News  
 Byline: Krisendra Bisetty  
 Dateline: VANCOUVER  
 Source: Vancouver Sun

VANCOUVER - The University of B.C.'s \$172-million Life Sciences Centre, the largest building on the campus, opens officially today, and students say they are impressed by its high-tech lecture rooms and laboratories.

But its plain exterior design was panned by some students interviewed Wednesday.

The five-storey building will house the UBC medical school and a variety of teaching and research facilities for life sciences. Students have been using the main-floor facilities for the past month but there are still a couple of months to go before the rest of the 565,000-square-foot of space becomes available, building manager Jim Ramsay said Wednesday.

While the exterior may look ordinary, inside it's anything but. The most distinctive features include two huge, glass-roofed atriums the height of the building and connecting what are essentially three separate buildings.

Beechwood and glass are used extensively throughout and the amount of natural light in the structure is not found in any other building on the campus, Ramsay said.

The multi-purpose laboratory is equipped with 160 computer work stations and the two identical lecture theatres that can seat up to 350 students also have high-tech audio-visual equipment. This will enable live links with tele-learning facilities at the University of Victoria and the University of Northern B.C. via cameras that will allow medical students in Victoria or Prince George to listen to a lecture delivered at UBC and ask questions, and vice versa.

Students will also be able to use laptop computers for wireless Internet connection.

The building, Ramsay said, is the most technologically advanced at UBC and has energy-saving control features such as light and heat sensors.

"I'm impressed. Everything seems so modern," said second-year medical student Andrew Scott.



Steve Bosch, Vancouver Sun

The UBC Life Sciences Centre is the most technologically advanced building on campus.



Steve Bosch, Vancouver Sun

One of two large atriums dwarfs a security guard in the \$172-million Life Sciences Centre officially opening at UBC today.

Mike Symonds, a third-year civil engineering student who walked through the building for the first time Wednesday, described its interior as "superior" and said he liked the incorporation of classrooms with research facilities.

But he was put off by the exterior. "For a building this size, it could have been something more. It's overly simple even for a modern design."

Teresa Marshall, project manager for a company hired to handle the IT installations, described the centre as "a diamond" compared to others at UBC. "It's new, clean and definitely more efficient."

Crews were still busy at the centre Wednesday, putting on the final touches ahead of today's official opening and also carrying out work on four floors that will house laboratories for medical research and for the life sciences, including biochemistry, molecular biology, microbiology, immunology, anatomy, physiology, zoology and medical genetics. There's also morgue below ground, holding cadavers for use in medical instruction.

The facility, which is capable of accommodating 2,654 people, is part of the provincial government's commitment to double the number of graduating medical students to 256 per year by 2010.

Illustration:

- Color Photo: Steve Bosch, Vancouver Sun / The UBC Life Sciences Centre is the most technologically advanced building on campus.
- Color Photo: Steve Bosch, Vancouver Sun / One of two large atriums dwarfs a security guard in the \$172-million Life Sciences Centre officially opening at UBC today.

Idnumber: 200411040111

Edition: Final

Story Type: News

Length: 464 words

Keywords: UNIVERSITIES; EDUCATION

Illustration Type: Colour Photo