**Putting the Arts on Display at Longwood***The renovation and addition of Bedford Hall expected to be completed by 2012.*

Bedford Hall, home to the art department at Longwood University, has been under construction since October 2009. The existing 26,242 square foot hall will be completely renovated and an additional 48,620 square feet will be added onto the existing Bedford Hall. According to Jerry Jerome, Longwood University’s facilities planner, “The primary purpose of this project is to putthe arts on display at Longwood University. The project addresses the art department’s need for space and the appropriate systems to function properly and provide a safe and inviting environment for students and faculty.”

Longwood University and contractors Costello Construction, Inc., of Maryland are renovating and adding many things to the existing hall such as, new faculty and staff offices, visiting professor’s studios, a digital media lab, a photography gallery, a new lecture hall, new classrooms, and new presentation and critique spaces. The addition will hold academic galleries, eight faculty offices, drawing and painting studios, a fiber and papermaking studio, a metals, glass, and jewelry studio, and as well as eight other studios.

Once construction is complete, the glass walls within the addition will really put Longwood student, staff, and donated art collections on display for everyone to see. The courtyard in between the Center for Communications Studies and Theater building and the new Bedford Hall will make an “art garden,” said Jerome and will include a sculpture garden, a reflecting pool, and a water well as well as the art on display inside the glass walls of Bedford.

After the fires at the Bedford construction site on August 23, 2010, the first day of classes this semester, many have speculated as to whether or not this was going to impede construction efforts therefore pushing back the projected date of completion of the construction. Jerome said, “The current schedule calls for the addition to be completed in summer 2011 and the renovations of the existing building to be completed in summer 2012. We do not have any specific changes to the schedule as a result of the fire, but at this time the overall schedule has not been significantly affected.”

Although this construction project may not affect a large section of campus, those students who have classes in the Communications Studies and Theater building and in the original Bedford building have to contend with the construction daily. Mike Youmans, a Communications Studies major, said about the renovations and construction, “It doesn’t affect me much…the wall [in between Hull and The Communications Studies and Theater buildings] makes my walk to class a little bit longer and sometimes the construction noise interrupts class. Other than that it isn’t much of a distraction and I am looking forward to seeing the construction finished.” These are only minor distractions when thinking about that the final project is going to be such a relaxing learning environment. Youmans also said that although he did not think that he personally would benefit much from the addition and renovations but he did think, “the campus would benefit because it would make the campus look that much nicer, it will also benefit the departments that are in Bedford Hall because the renovations will attract more students to Art department classes and majors.”

Art Professor Dr. J.S.J. Burke had a similar perspective of how the addition and renovation would affect the flow of students into the art department. Burke said he definitely thought the renovations would draw students into the building and hopefully into classes, “because when you see important architecture on campus, communication of the building is more prominent.” Burke also said that he was looking forward to having more access to all different facilities. Through all 22 years that he has work at Longwood University he had been hearing about the renovations and now that they are so close to being finished he called it a, “present.” Burke said he believes that the renovations really, “accentuate the ‘center spine’ of our campus, and the inside/outside view of the new addition will really invite people to come and experience the arts.”

Although the Bedford Project has only been under way for a little over a year, its completion has been long awaited by many on campus. The addition and renovation of Bedford will give Longwood University access to so many more types/variations of media and tools throughout the department. The addition will also offer many more different types of courses in the art department, as well as giving students more elective choices if they choose to further their knowledge of art throughout college. Longwood’s vision of putting the arts on display is something that will bring students into Bedford to see what students and faculty have to offer in the art department but will also just allow Longwood’s campus to really experience the arts.