

City U college on course for '93

By MARY ENGELS

Daily News Staff Writer

1993. That's the target date for the opening of the new College of Staten Island at Willowbrook at the former site of the Staten Island Developmental Center.

In the planning stage for more than a decade, the college, when completed, will be housed on "one of the most attractive campuses in the New York City area," according to Edmund Volpe, CSI's president.

The present college, the only City University of New York facility located on Staten Island, is based at two locations. One, in St. George at Stuyvesant Place, consists of high-rise buildings in the heart of the Island's civic center.

The other, on Ocean Terrace in Sunnyside, is a complex of low-rise buildings on a 42-acre suburban site. A shuttle service connects the two within a 20-minute driving time.

Volpe said, "For a long time, there has been a need to consolidate in order to achieve operational efficiencies, to eliminate duplication of facilities and to accommodate any future growth."

'Perfect choice'

Volpe made note of the years spent "in looking at various Island sites, and all being rejected for one reason or another. Then, a few years ago, Willowbrook became available and it seemed the perfect choice," he said.

Out of more than 400 acres available, the college got 205 acres, and the planning process for the new campus began. The firm of Edward Durrell Stone Associates, architects and planners, was chosen to prepare a comprehensive master plan for the consolidated campus.

It included new construction, as well as renovation of existing structures. Volpe said, "We will be keeping 15 existing buildings. The others will be demolished and new ones added."

The overall project has been divided into five individual design packages based on the master plan. Various firms, including Stone's, have been selected to do the job.

The original game plan was to have had the complete programming for academic uses and pre-schematic designs, landscape inventory and site preparation work begin last year.

"Unfortunately, it didn't work out that way," Volpe said. "As of now, everything is in a state of flux, as the architects and builders are continually changing their plans."

"We are still working with the pre-schematics at this point," Volpe explained. "The architects are beginning to envision the buildings and where everything should go, and, once this is completed, they are required to present the City University's board of trustees with three different design plans."

"It will then be up to the board to make a choice. And, from there, we get to the schematics and more detailed drawings and designs. It's a complex project, and we have had a number of delays because of it."

Volpe added, "If it gets done by 1993, it will be a miracle."

By the time it's completed, Volpe estimated, the cost will be "about \$260 million. The construction alone will run about \$189 million and will be done in stages."

Before anything can begin, he noted, "We have to clean out the asbestos from the old buildings first."

Focus of the new campus will be the theater complex, which will have a 900-seat auditorium and a 450-seat legitimate theater. "It will be one of the largest performing-arts public theaters on the Island, and it is an exciting project," Volpe said.

"We will also have a new gym with a 50-foot-long swimming pool, a major science center and a new library. All the student-activities centers will be connected by a central walk, and it will be virtually a pedestrian campus with space for more than 2,000 cars on the fringes of the complex," he said.

Volpe added, "The new college will have room for expansion for the future. Given the number of programs and services we provide—and are increasing every day—we will eventually need more and more buildings."

"In the meantime, the new campus will serve as the footprint for the future."

New programs set

Among the new programs the college embarked on in recent months are the Center for Immigrant and Population Studies, the Center for Environmental Science, and the establishment of a Center for Developmental Neurosciences with the Institute for Basic Research.

"The college and the Institute for Basic Research," Volpe said, "will also work closely with the Staten Island Developmental Disabilities Service Office and the voluntary agencies to develop professional training programs for persons working with the developmentally disabled."

"I'm almost afraid to accept new grants. I don't know where to put the people. We need to get more lab space. We need to get that new college."

Page 1

2 of Pages