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Roosevelt University to Construct 32-Story Building

School says it will be 2nd-tallest in U.S. behind University of Pittsburgh's

By William Lee
Tribune Reporter

Officials at Roosevelt University are moving forward with a plan to build what they say would be the second-tallest university building in the nation.

Construction on the 32-story, \$110 million building is set to begin in February on the site of the old Herman Crown Center in the 400 block of South Wabash Avenue. The groundbreaking will begin once demolition of the old building is complete, with the center itself slated to open in January 2012, officials said.

The state-of-the-art building, which will house classrooms, laboratories, a student recreation center and residence suites for more than 600 students, will be the university's first newly constructed building in the school's history, officials said.

The 469-foot-tall building will also be constructed as a "green" building and showcase a glass exterior on three sides, drawing in natural light and cutting energy costs. The new building, school officials said, would be the sixth-largest university building in the world and second in the U.S. behind the University of Pittsburgh's Cathedral of Learning.

"It's a very 21st century building -- and that's the university we favor," Roosevelt President Chuck Middleton said.

A booming student enrollment combined with low-priced real estate from the economic crisis and city support for the new structure made construction optimal, Middleton said.

Approved by the board of trustees this summer, the center is being paid for by the sale of \$180 million in bonds. Middleton says the cost of living in the stylish residence hall is comparable to other downtown residence halls.

What the new skyscraper may be able to do is set Roosevelt apart from 22 other colleges and universities with downtown campuses, he said.

"We were first. We've been there nearly 65 years. Downtown as a higher education center in the United States is the first and foremost place to concentrate students," Middleton said. "The more students that come downtown to study at Roosevelt, the better."