

# Renovated Bennett Hall Unites Allied Health

by Karen Burbach



**UNMC's School of Allied Health Professions (SAHP) was formed 37 years ago, but it has never been under the same roof. Last year, all that changed.**

The \$8.9 million renovation of Bennett Hall turned a building built during Woodrow Wilson's presidency into a modernized home for SAHP's 11 educational programs, as well as its distance education department.

"The consolidation of our faculty and administrative functions has generated great enthusiasm among our faculty, staff and students," said Kyle Meyer, Ph.D., associate dean of the SAHP. "I am confident it will lead to greater collaboration and innovation among our faculty in both research and teaching."

The third-oldest building on the UNMC campus (after Poynter Hall and University Tower reopened last fall to rave reviews as natural light spilled through oversized windows and into corridors with dark crown moldings and granite floors. High ceilings, wall sconces, opaque glass on office doors, a restored stairway and Earth tones further compliment the building's early history.

The dramatic renovation is the result of a 2006 legislative bill (LB605) that provided state funds to upgrade buildings on all four University of Nebraska campuses.

The renovation compliments the SAHP's vision to increase its clinical research funding, as well as its scholarly activity. "We are focused on research that advances rural health and promotes quality aging – two issues vital to Nebraskans," Dr. Meyer said.

The SAHP already plays a critical role in the state's health care system through its educational mission. The school graduates approximately 175 allied health practitioners annually; many of whom stay in Nebraska.

Nationally, 60 percent of the health care workforce is made up of allied health care professionals, who work with colleagues in medicine, nursing, pharmacy and public health to provide critical diagnostic, intervention or technology support services, Dr. Meyer said.

The demand for allied health professionals continues to grow. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that, between 2006

and 2016, increased demand for physician assistants, physical therapists, radiation therapists, clinical laboratory scientists, radiographers, sonographers and nuclear medicine technologists – all of which UNMC educates – will range from 15 percent to 27 percent.

## **EDUCATIONAL SPACE – integrated throughout the building – includes:**

- A tiered amphitheater that accommodates up to 40 students with technology for distance education;
- A 2,000-plus square foot classroom and laboratory for physical therapy and physician assistant students;
- The Karen Allen Linder Microscopy Suite for cytotechnology students;
- A multi-purpose microscopy and learning resource room for clinical laboratory science students;
- Classroom and resource room equipped for distance education for clinical perfusion students; and
- A reading room designed to create a comfortable space for faculty and faculty-student interaction.

The proximity of the building, which sits on the northwest corner of 42nd and Emile Streets and is directly west of the new Michael F. Sorrell Center for Health Science Education, greatly benefits the school's 350 students, 53 faculty and 16 staff members.

The consolidation also provides a much-needed physical identity for the SAHP, Dr. Meyer said.

"The SAHP is delighted to physically join the 'educational corridor' with our colleagues from medicine, pharmacy and nursing," he said. "We appreciate all who have worked to make Bennett Hall not only the new, but the first home, of the School of Allied Health Professions." ∞