The state has appropriated $10.6 million in capital improvements funding to Three Rivers College over the last decade, but nearly $6 million, or approximately 56%, has been vetoed.
The main campus of Three Rivers College is located in Poplar Bluff. The college’s service area includes portions of 17 southeast Missouri counties and includes the communities of West Plains, Cape Girardeau, Dexter, Sikeston, New Madrid, Malden, Kennett, and Hayti. In addition to the main campus, Three Rivers operates centers in Dexter, Kennett, Piedmont, Sikeston, and Cape Girardeau. Approximately 3,500 students attend classes at Three Rivers.

Capital Improvement & Facilities History

Since fiscal year 1999, Three Rivers has been appropriated renovation funding three times. However, in fiscal year 2015, the entire $5.7 million appropriated for a renovation and construction to the Eastern Campus was vetoed. In fiscal year 2019, $250,000 of a $3 million appropriation for a renovation and expansion of the Crisp Technology Center was vetoed. The college received the entire Board of Public Buildings bond appropriation in 2016. This $1.9 million was used to fund multiple deferred maintenance projects at various buildings.

Facility Challenges

Three Rivers’ campus consists of seven Education & General Buildings and eight Auxiliary Buildings with over 218,000 gross square feet (GSF). However, over 50 percent of the E&G Buildings on the main campus have not had a major renovation in over 15 years.

Currently, the campus has over $20 million in facilities needs including over $119,000 in deferred maintenance.
Capital Priorities

Three Rivers College has identified the following as the college’s top three capital priorities for the future. The total state request for these projects is approximately $8 million.

1. Westover Entrance & Exterior Renovation

The Westover Building was built in 1978 and was the first structure on the Three Rivers campus. The interior of the building has been continuously renovated, as it is the hub of administration, faculty offices, and student services.

Currently, the main priority for Three Rivers is an exterior renovation of the Westover Building. The exterior is in need of an update to better fit into the character of the new and renovated buildings it faces to the north. Many of the fixtures and design elements are original to the building, which are older than can be found anywhere else on campus.

Many windows leak, causing water damage, and are energy deficient. This renovation will increase energy efficiency and save Three Rivers in long-term operational costs. Exterior siding contains asbestos panels; and the western entrance to the student welcome center has no protection from the elements. The roof is beginning to fail and needs remediation to preserve the integrity of the building and prevent future exorbitant expenditures.

Request from State: $2,500,000

2. Bess Activity Center

The athletic department is vacating the gymnasium portion of the Bess Activity Center, which will free up this area for other functional purposes. Space for large meetings, banquets, seminars, and/or conferences will allow student organizations the space they need to effectively engage students in campus activities, improving student satisfaction and opportunities at Three Rivers.

The transformation of the space into a student recreation center will entail creating flexibly-sized banquet rooms in the existing gymnasium and creating a full food service operation. A multipurpose space could still be used for athletic recreation and other activities. These uses will mesh well with the recent renovation of the student center areas in the back of the building, which include the fitness center and college store, and will better meet the college’s current and future needs.

Request from State: $3,000,000
3. Campuswide Deferred Maintenance

Due to lacking funds, a number of needed maintenance projects have been deferred throughout campus. A number of the college’s buildings have failing roofs that are at the end of their useful life. Despite short-term remedies, several roofs continue to leak, causing interior water damage to classrooms and offices. Parking lots throughout campus have failing asphalt that continues to crumble despite sealing.

In front of the new Libla Family Sports Complex is a creek which runs south along the entire length of the Three Rivers campus. The creek presents a number of drainage issues and is costly to maintain from overgrowth. Replacing a section of the creek with culverts will allow better flood protection and water management for the campus, with much less required maintenance and long-term costs.

Numerous small projects remain to remediate specific issues of deferred maintenance. Addressing these issues becomes increasingly costly as they are deferred. Addressing them in the near future will save significant resources for Three Rivers in the long term.

Click here for campus map. Click here for Google view.