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## Like home economics, Terrill lags behind times

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If the new Davis Center were a breath of fresh air on the University of Vermont campus, the exhalation was not so pure.

Just north of the massive four-story structure, celebrated for its eco-friendliness, sits the smaller, older, plainer Terrill building. Terrill has experienced its share of environmental stress -- mainly, bad air from the Davis construction -- with the result that UVM administrators have put Terrill's rehabilitation on the fast track.

Page=001 Column=001 OK,0000.04Terrill, an unpretentious box-like structure built in 1950 in the Art Deco-Moderne style, has ventilation problems.

"During the Davis Center construction, the negative air pressure in Terrill pulled in additional odors, dust and engine combustion fumes that its antiquated ventilation system was unable to handle properly," said university spokesman Enrique Corredera in an e-mail response to a query. As a result, he said, seven occupants experienced "relatively minor eye, nose and throat irritation symptoms; and three occupants experienced nausea, headaches and allergy symptoms.

"The completion of the Davis Center has significantly improved the situation," Corredera said. "However, Terrill's ventilation system still needs to be replaced."

UVM officials have decided that work should be done sooner, rather than later, so the building is likely to be vacated next month. That means the current occupants will be relocated until the work is completed next summer. The departments of animal science and nutrition and food science have faculty offices, classrooms and lab space in Terrill.

Terrill exemplifies a challenge that UVM shares with universities across the country: what to do with old buildings that have long since outlived their original purposes. UVM has more than two dozen buildings that date from the 19th century and two dozen more that, like Terrill, are more than 50 years old.

Terrill's obsolescencebehind-the-times status extends to its full name, inscribed in large capital letters just below the roof across the front of the building: "Bertha M Terrill Home Economics Building."

The rise and fall of home ec

The question of what's happening to the Terrill building belies another question: Whatever happened to home economics?

Bertha M. Terrill, UVM's first female faculty member, organized the home economics department in 1909. In the early 20th century, home economics proved to be a principal entre to higher education for women -- students and faculty -- during an era when the predominantly male academic environment was less than welcoming.

"As the national trend in women's higher education turned to producing skilled housewives rather than moral leaders," wrote Constance McGovern in an essay, "Women at UVM" published in the university's bicentennial history, "the Department of Home Economics became the focus of the collegiate training of many UVM women."

The department grew and flourished to the point where, from 1955 to 1973, the formal name of UVM's agricultural wing was "College of Agriculture and Home Economics."

According to a 1987 history of the home economics at UVM by Blair Williams, who served as department chairwoman for eight years, the 1950s in the spacious new quarters were perhaps the department's heyday. Then came the "years of rebellion" in the '60s that "stretched faculty imagination and endurance. Smoking in classes became accepted, dogs accompanied their owners to class. ... (L)aboratory dress for foods classes which had been white uniforms and hair net for so long gave way first to informal aprons finally to 'come as you are.' What an embarrassment those years were!"

In the '70s, at UVM and elsewhere, faculties grew more critical of home economics as insufficiently academic or scientific. The department was abolished in 1980 in favor of a multidisciplinary program. In the mid-'90s, the term "home economics" was largely abandoned as national organizations and institutional programs recast themselves as "family and consumer sciences."

Today, UVM students can major in family and consumer sciences in preparation for teaching in middle and high school.

The continued presence in Terrill of nutrition and food sciences is a link to the past. The original floor plan for the third story designated separate laboratories for "food and nutrition research," "meal planning" and "experimental foods."

Today's labs are put to different uses -- molecular biology and cellular research, among others.

"The use of space has changed dramatically over the years," said Rachel Johnson, dean of an entity that's now called College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. "We're a very different college than we were 25 years ago." -- we're a life science college."

#### Old buildings, new uses

Indeed, it was partly the "piecemeal of addition of laboratory space over the years that threw the fresh-air intake/air exhaust out of balance at Terrill," according to Corredera. The cost of renovating Terrill and the Marsh Life Sciences building (1960) next door, according to a strategic capital plan list presented to UVM trustees earlier this year, was \$6 million.

The work at Terrill -- including new heating and air conditioning systems, new ventilation and electrical systems, and lab upgrades -- typifies how an evolving university has to refashion its old building stock for new purposes.

Perhaps the most ambitious project of all, according to Bob Vaughan, director of capital planning and management, was the reconstruction of the Old Mill building (1882) in the mid-'90s. Roofing work alone on Williams Hall (1896) cost more than \$1 million. Then there's Billings (1885) -- designed by renowned architect H.H. Richardson as a library, then converted to a student center in the '60s, and now scheduled -- thanks to the completion of the Davis Center -- to be converted at least in part back to a library.

Simply maintaining the university's aging buildings is a big expense in itself. The UVM trustees' strategic capital plan calls for about \$5 million a year just for "deferred maintenance."

One thing that hasn't changed at UVM is the chronic need to come up with the money to pay for capital projects. Here's how the home economics proponents addressed that problem in the late 1940s:

Women's groups around the state lobbied the Legislature for a new building, according to Williams' account. When members of the legislative appropriations committee visited UVM to check out the need for themselves, they

happened to show up during Dr. Florence B. King's food preparation class and were served "delicious dark chocolate cake piled high with White Mountain Frosting."

All these efforts were rewarded with an appropriation in 1949. The building's completion in 1951 generated some excitement. King wrote a newsletter article that took the reader on a tour of the place.

On the third floor, she wrote, "you will find Miss Bailey's class in Meal planning and Service using the lovely, traditionally furnished dining room for a luncheon or dinner or perhaps a lesson serving a formal tea."

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