

Lee Hall: Bring Back the Music

Once the social center of campus life, Lee Hall now stands empty. No one strolls across its terrazzo floors; no couples glide past its bandstand; the generous fireplace is cold and dark. If you stand in the deserted ballroom and close your eyes, it is easy to imagine the laughter of students and the echoes of a waltz from the past.

As Northern Michigan University continues to grow and set ever more ambitious goals, it is looking to its best traditions to better serve its students, alumni and community. Lee Hall is a part of those traditions and of the university's vision for the future. Although plans are not finalized, the hall is considered a prime candidate for renovation.

A revitalized Lee Hall would stand not only as a touchstone of the university's heritage, but as a gathering place where alumni, visitors and neighbors alike would find a welcoming environment and a warm hearth. A refurbished hall would also provide a much-needed additional venue for campus or community events and gatherings—a role that Lee Hall has played with elegance in the past.

In addition, the hall would become the permanent home of the Beaumier Heritage Center. The Heritage Center was made possible by a \$1 million gift from **Dr. John Beaumier '53**. It opened last year in a temporary space in the Superior Dome (see article in this issue of *Horizons*).

Currently, the greatest challenge



An architect's rendering of the exterior of the renovated Lee Hall Alumni and Visitor Center, reminiscent of its past, with elements tying in to the more modern look of campus.

to the renovation is funding. In the face of dwindling state appropriations, no dollars can be squeezed out of an already tight budget to fully fund this project. It will take private support to bring the music back to Lee Hall and restore the grace and purpose that it displayed for decades.

A Glance Back

Over the years, Lee Hall has served many functions for NMU. The hall was opened as a student union in December 1948 and dedicated to Harry D. Lee, who served Northern for 18 years as head of the career placement bureau. According to NMU Historian Russ Magnaghi's *A Sense of Time: The Encyclopedia of Northern Michigan University*.

"The Union served as a center for student activities, organization dinners, conferences, faculty meetings, card games, movies, ping pong 'and anything else.' Some students found employment in the building while commuters used the handy

dining room and cafeteria. Every year, the foyer was decorated with a Christmas tree and trimmings, followed by an annual Christmas party for the employees. The Yule log was found burning in the fireplace and students relaxed in the lounge. As enrollment dramatically increased in the 1950s, plans were made for a larger facility. The Don H. Bottum University Center was completed in 1960 and Lee Hall was then converted to a television and radio studio."

In the 1970s the hall became the home of the Art and Design Department, the University Art Museum and the NMU Public Safety and Police Services. During its tenure as the Lee Hall Gallery and later as the Northern Michigan University Art Museum, the space exhibited the work of NMU students and faculty, as well as local, national and international artists. These functions also migrated to new facilities as the university continued to expand its campus in response to growth and progress.

Looking Ahead

Today, Lee Hall represents more than memories. The building offers an exciting opportunity to establish an Alumni and Visitor Center where campus and community can confer, congregate and celebrate—all with a spectacular view of Lake Superior.

Nothing embodies a more compelling bridge between past and present than the Beaumier Heritage Center. Installation in a dedicated Lee Hall space seems an apt choice to further establish the center as an enduring tribute to the Upper Peninsula, its settlers and their descendants. Most importantly, students on campus and from schools across the region will have the best possible opportunities, in the most effective environment, to learn more about the rich history of the area.

The Alumni and Visitor Center will also provide a place that

graduates can call “home,” a rendezvous point to reminisce in an exciting, revitalized venue.

The renovation plans include a restaurant-type facility (the “NMU Club”), conference rooms, catering

heritage, service to the region and an appreciation for the area’s natural beauty.

With the support of alumni and other friends of the university, the day will come when it won’t be

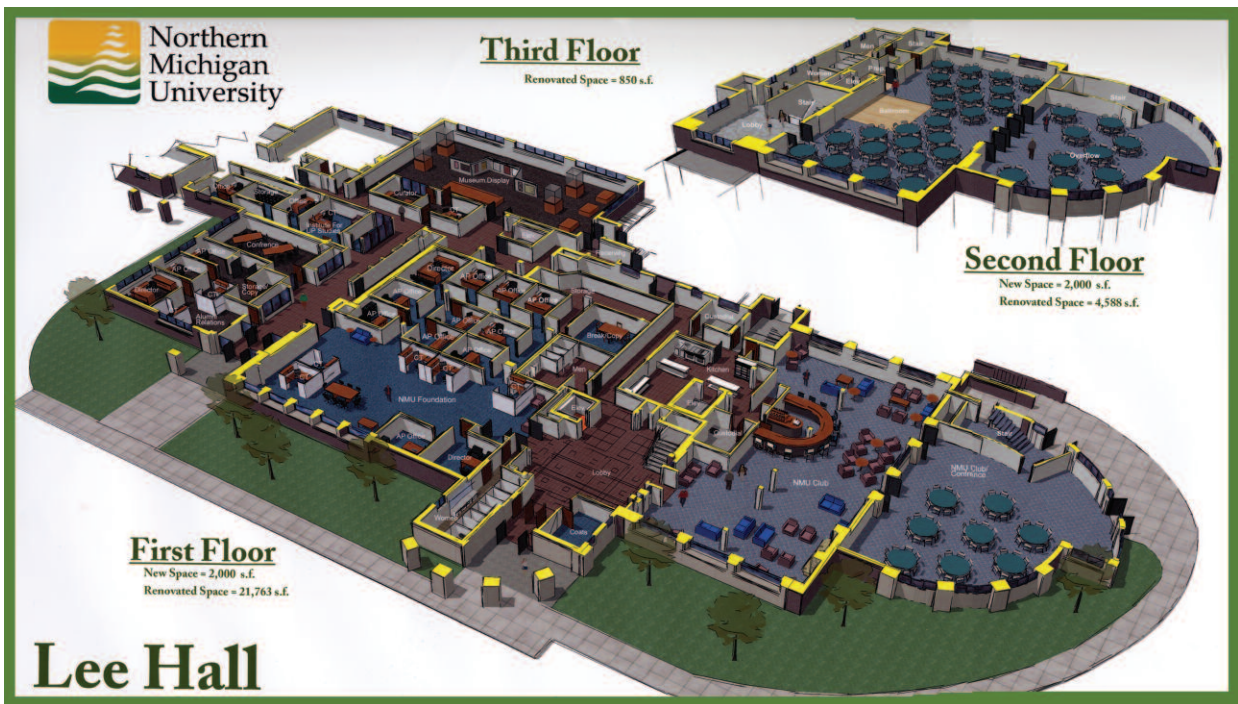
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and, in keeping with the university’s strategy for the most efficient and effective use of resources, offices for the Alumni Association and the NMU Foundation.

All in all, the new Lee Hall will be an embodiment of NMU’s best qualities: the fusion of practicality and innovation, a respect for

necessary to imagine laughter and music in Lee Hall, but simply to stand and listen.

Share your memories of Lee Hall by writing to horizons@nmu.edu. We’ll post them on the Horizons Web site, along with historic photos of the building.



Plans call for the center to feature casual and formal meeting spaces, a renovated ballroom, a restaurant, the Beaumier Heritage Center, and easy access to Alumni Association and NMU Foundation offices.

Donor Profile

The History Keepers

Diane Kordich and Russ

Magnaghi want to tell the world a story about education, extraordinary people and a very special place. It's the story of NMU and the Upper Peninsula. They've been telling it in class, books, oral histories and displays around campus.

Kordich is a recently retired professor of art and design, and Magnaghi is a history professor and university historian. The husband and wife team are generous annual donors to Northern and creators of such privately funded opportunities as the Bobbi Ameen Memorial Scholarship for art and design students and the Grace Magnaghi Visiting Research Fellowship Grant.

"We feel that our donations will help students further their education



Russ Magnaghi with an exhibit moose and Diane Kordich in the classroom

and provide some extras which can be useful to them," they say.

Some of these "extras" include helping purchase the Henry R. Schoolcraft papers on microfilm, which document his tenure as a U.S. Indian agent in the Superior region in the mid-1800s and providing significant support to purchase most



major U.P. newspapers on microfilm.

Magnaghi says, "These allow our students, today and tomorrow, to focus on major historical themes for research papers. Such collections greatly enhance the reputation of the archives and attract researchers to NMU."

Gifts in Action

Peer tutoring makes the grade

Gifts to the Parents and Family Fund have helped make an innovative student assistance program possible. Peer-assisted learning (PAL) offers intensive tutoring for the most challenging introductory courses and helps students develop study skills and strategies while providing critical motivation and guidance. In this program, the learning experience is built on a student-to-student framework using structured individual and group sessions, workshops and reviews. As part of the All-Campus Tutoring program, these services are free.



Kyle Vrtis

PAL helps students build their knowledge in a specific subject in an effective and un-intimidating manner. "The goal is to get freshman and sophomores through our most difficult introductory courses, so they can continue with their programs," says Bill Bernard,

associate provost for student services. "Students will often go an extra mile or two if it's another student telling them they can make it." The tutors also help develop overall study skills and provide motivational support.

For tutors, the PAL program pays an hourly wage that can help offset the expenses of a higher education. But it often means more than a paycheck. The tutoring experience builds confidence, communication skills and, in some cases, may open the door to a career in teaching.

According to organic chemistry tutor Kyle Vrtis, "Tutoring has been one of the greatest experiences of my life. Through tutoring I have developed professionally, academically and personally. As a tutor, few phrases are as powerful as 'oh, I get it now' or simply 'thanks for the help.' One of my career goals is to become a professor so I can continue reaching out to students."

As another tutor sums up: "Tutoring was probably the most worthwhile and amazing experience I had at NMU."

Thank you to the generous parents, family members and friends who are helping to make opportunities like these possible. With their support, programs like peer-assisted learning will continue to offer new and creative ways for NMU students to grow and excel.