

4-1-2011

## Looking Good! Major Renovation Enhances the Ambiance of O'Brian Hall

UB Law Forum

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub\\_law\\_forum](https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub_law_forum)

---

### Recommended Citation

UB Law Forum (2011) "Looking Good! Major Renovation Enhances the Ambiance of O'Brian Hall," *UB Law Forum*: Vol. 23: No. 2, Article 11.

Available at: [https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub\\_law\\_forum/vol23/iss2/11](https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub_law_forum/vol23/iss2/11)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Alumni Publications at Digital Commons @ University at Buffalo School of Law. It has been accepted for inclusion in UB Law Forum by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ University at Buffalo School of Law. For more information, please contact [lawscholar@buffalo.edu](mailto:lawscholar@buffalo.edu).

# LOOKING GOOD!

*Major renovation enhances the  
ambiance of O'Brian Hall*



**Y**ou never get a second chance to make a first impression. So the thousands of people who enter John Lord O'Brian Hall each day – students, faculty, administrators, visitors, potential students – will find a friendlier, more professional and more inviting place when the Law School's substantial renovation is completed this year.

The renovation, which is concentrated on the highly trafficked first floor, is being funded by the University at Buffalo and by private donations to the Law School. Completion is expected by October.

"The first floor and entrance of any building creates a lasting impression on visitors and occupants," says Dean Makau W. Mutua. "We are re-creating the first floor to give a professional look and make it a comfortable and welcoming space for students, faculty, staff, alumni and visitors. Once completed, it will transform the visual impression of UB Law."

James R. Newton, vice dean for administration, says the heaviest users of

the first floor – students – "are really enthusiastic about it. This is really their space; they spend 80 percent of their time on that first floor."

Especially popular is the recent renovation of the first-floor student lounge, accomplished with a bequest from Michael Doran '82 and major gifts from his family and colleagues. That project includes new windows, blinds, carpeting and furniture to create a comfortable retreat for overburdened law students.

The main entryway area, near the elevators, has new lighting, wood-look flooring and wooden columns. A raft of other improvements include new benches, a building directory, stair railings, a 30-foot wooden display case for faculty scholarship and another to display student trophies from moot court competitions, a "lifetime giving wall" honoring top alumni donors to the Law School, and new handicapped-accessible restrooms offering greater parity for female students. Two flat-screen monitors will be installed, one featuring administrative announcements and one

for student use.

Perhaps most significantly, a new vestibule is being installed to serve as a main entrance to the hall – something it has never had in its 38-year history. Students were asked to vote on the design of the furnishings and chose an elegantly curved wooden reception desk.

A secondary project is to install a second-floor lounge opposite the entrance to the Law Library.

The project is in its final push toward completion, a task complicated by the need to minimize construction noise in a working Law School. Summer classes, including bar review courses, will be moved out of the first-floor lecture halls this summer to accommodate construction.

"This first-floor area is the first impression people have – visitors and prospective students especially," Newton says. "But most importantly, this project is intended to improve the quality of life for students."

In addition, the first of a major upgrade in technological capability is complete, with two main first-floor classrooms – Rooms 106 and 108 – now wired for electronic teaching technologies.

The project comes following a survey in which faculty members were asked what technologies would help them teach better, and after Terrence E. McCormack, head of the M. Robert Koren Center for Clinical Legal Education and interim manager of Law School technology, visited law schools nationwide that showcase their instructional technology as a key component of the learning experience. It's a feature that resonates with students, he says, who routinely use YouTube clips and PowerPoint in their own presentations.

"Our aim," he says, "is to move toward teaching technologies that are functional for teaching and learning, but also are as transparent as possible."

As UB Law builds lawyers ready for the future, they will expect nothing less.