SERA Architects Inc. of Portland will design a shared Rogue Community College/Southern Oregon University instructional facility to be built in downtown Medford.

The RCC Board of Education approved a resolution Tuesday during its regular meeting, joining SOU in a contract with SERA Architects for design and engineering services. The downtown project will create a center of between 75,000 and 95,000 square feet at a cost of about $18 to $23 million. The building is proposed for the block bounded by East Eighth, Ninth, and South Bartlett streets and South Riverside Avenue.

Funding for the building comes in part from the Oregon Legislature and from a $24 million RCC capital construction bond measure, approved November 2005 by Jackson County voters. Last summer, the Legislature approved $5.5 million in bonding authority and $3 million outright in state funding for SOU, and another $4.1 million in state bonding authority for RCC. RCC has promised $5.75 million from its bond measure, and SOU is working to raise $2.5 million.

The building will facilitate dual enrollment for RCC and SOU students by providing a seamless integration of programs and services, college officials have said, and will encourage transfer from the community college to the university.

Co-location will allow both institutions to realize greater efficiencies by sharing some classrooms, the lobby and student areas. Academic benefits will be realized, including increased services for students, better connectivity between instructional programs, and co-teaching. It’s also hoped that the shared facility will optimize service to the business community by SOU and RCC combining resources, coordinating work with business partners, and providing a share location for workforce training, internships, and research. All of these elements will contribute to the economic development of the downtown Medford area.

College and university personnel and several community members have formed an advisory council to the shared education facility. A meeting is planned March 1 at the Jackson County Central Library in downtown Medford.
“Participants will hear an update on planning for the joint facility that has already taken place, meet the architects who have been hired to move us through the design process, and understand the vision and framework for the planning we will do together,” Dr. Peter Angstadt, RCC President, and Dr. Earl Potter, SOU provost and vice president for academic affairs, said in a jointly released statement.

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