FAU Library Remodels Study Rooms, Adds Collaboration Areas, High-Tech Devices for Loan after Hearing from Students

BOCA RATON (September 22, 2011) – Florida Atlantic University sought student opinion about FAU’s libraries. Then, when students returned to campus this fall, they found remodeled study rooms, group collaboration areas and borrowing privileges for Macbooks, calculators, pocket video cameras, e-book readers and other new electronics.

The condition of the study rooms and a desire for more high-tech study tools topped surveys and filled suggestion boxes. “We looked at what the students asked for most, and we did as much as we could based on the budget,” said Dawn Smith, assistant dean for public services at FAU Libraries.

The Wimberly Library’s 23 study rooms were painted a bright white and new carpet, light brown wooden chair rails and aluminum-framed white boards were installed in each room, softening the look of the rooms. The study rooms are on the third and fourth floors and are available to groups of up to four students on a first-come basis; the key must be checked out at the circulation desk. For groups of up to six people, areas on the first and second floors, and three large study rooms on the fourth floor were reconfigured for large group collaboration areas. Each area has a personal computer, large monitor and a laptop connection.

Another big addition -- a multi-media room -- is in the works. The room will have such equipment as a projector, screen, multimedia lectern, media player, graphic tablet with mouse and pen, software for graphics and image editing, and 3D animation editing software, which will allow students to mix music, edit video or do mock presentations and interviews.

“It will be a place where they can work on their personal or class projects,” said Smith. “Our students are going to love it.”

Beginning this semester, students can borrow new video cameras, scientific calculators and graphing calculators for up to three hours. These devices will complement the library’s laptop computer loan program, which has grown steadily since its inception in 2003 when it loaned 10 laptops 1,134 times. Students borrowed the library’s 48 laptops 18,267 times during
the 2010-11 academic year, compared to the 10,000 times they borrowed them during the 2009-2010 academic year.

The library also has a pilot program for e-book readers. Borrowers can choose between a Kindle or a Nook Color that is pre-loaded with recent best-sellers, popular fiction, nonfiction and the most requested interlibrary loan books.

This summer’s improvements are not the first at the library prompted by students. Over the past several years, lighting was added to the study areas in the west wing, and the atrium lobby was reconfigured to create a common area. Students can sit there in comfortable contemporary leather sofas, at round tables or at a computer station. High-end art and a bustling Dunkin’ Donuts outlet are within view.

William Miller, who will mark his 24th year as the library’s dean in December, said FAU Libraries’ goal is to continue to build a state of the art information technology environment and to enhance the physical environment. “It’s very gratifying to be able to respond to student needs and upgrade our facilities and services,” said Miller.

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Cutline
Photo #1: L-R, Ali Courtemanche and Claudia Vadillo in a study room at the Wimberly Library.
Photo #2: Kerlan St. Prix looks over some of the electronics that are available at the Wimberly Library.

About Florida Atlantic University:

Florida Atlantic University, established in 1961, officially opened its doors in 1964 as the fifth public university in Florida. In commemoration of its origin, FAU is celebrating its 50th anniversary throughout 2011. Today, the University serves more than 29,000 undergraduate and graduate students on seven campuses and sites. FAU’s world-class teaching and research faculty serves students through 10 colleges: the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters, the College of Business, the College for Design and Social Inquiry, the College of Education, the College of Engineering and Computer Science, the Graduate College, the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College, the Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine, the Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing and the Charles E. Schmidt College of Science. FAU is ranked as a High Research Activity institution by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. For more information, visit www.fau.edu.