By the time 14-year-old Matthew Reiners arrives on Oklahoma State University’s Stillwater campus, it will look much different than when his parents were taking classes in the 1990s. Derek and Lynn (Olinger) Reiners spent many hours in the current Business Building while Derek was earning a bachelor’s degree in finance and a master’s in accounting, and Lynn a degree in management science and information systems.

Matthew is expecting to become a legacy in a few years, but when he arrives, little will be the same as when his parents were walking across campus nearly 25 years ago.

The current Business Building will be replaced with a state-of-the-art building that will transform how students learn and faculty teach in the Spears School of Business.

The groundbreaking for the new building is scheduled for Sept. 5. Former students, faculty and staff, as well as friends and supporters of the school, are invited to participate in the 4 p.m. ceremony as part of the Spears School’s 100th Anniversary.

The design of the new building will be unveiled at the groundbreaking. Elliott + Associates Architects of Oklahoma City, which designed the Postal Plaza project in downtown Stillwater for OSU, is the architect for the new building, and Manhattan Construction was selected by the Board of Regents as the construction firm.

Construction on the new building, to be located north of the current Business Building, will begin in early 2015. Completion is expected in 2017.

“One of the most gratifying aspects about being named the dean is that we have so many great things converging now, including the new building coming to fruition,” says Ken Eastman, the long-time OSU professor who was named dean of the Spears School in June.

“The new building is not just a new facility but it’s going to allow us to transform who we are.
and how we do things. It will allow us to remake ourselves.”

The building is being funded through a combination of university funds, Spears School funds and philanthropic support, with donors contributing more than half of the current budget of $63 million. More than 200 individuals, corporations and foundations are making this landmark project possible through their gifts, and fundraising continues with the goal of raising the project's budget to $70 million to ensure all of the needed space can be constructed.

The new building will create an identity and a unified space for the Spears School, which has faculty and staff using four buildings across campus. It will include an inviting space for students from all other colleges, who are encouraged to take at least one business course while attending OSU.

Interactivity will be the key theme for the Spears School, and thus for the building. The architects are designing spaces that support interaction among students, among faculty, and between faculty and students. These spaces include formal common areas such as the living room and the ConocoPhillips Student Lounge, as well as informal spaces with comfortable, movable furniture where students and faculty can have conversations and meetings.

The new space for the Riata Center for Entrepreneurship will bring students together from all disciplines across campus so student entrepreneurs can find partners for building and launching their new ventures. Students from engineering, architecture, music, the human sciences and other disciplines will have the opportunity to meet with faculty for advice on launching businesses and to interact with business students to find compatible skills to build new companies, following in the footsteps of OSU alumni Amy and Malone Mitchell 3rd, whose careers as entrepreneurs began while they were students at OSU.

Interaction between students and alumni is another distinctive focus of the new building, which will include space for alumni to spend an entire day on campus meeting with students in
“The competition for students is fierce and I think when students walk in and see all the things the new building will have for them, they will be amazed. I think it will greatly improve our ability to recruit the best and brightest students, faculty and staff because who won’t want to attend school or work in a place that is this exciting?”

— Dean Ken Eastman

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small groups or one-on-one while staying connected with their offices.

“Having our alumni and other business people provide mentoring, guidance and encouragement to our students will be a defining feature of our facility and our entire approach to helping students launch new ventures. Those interactions will be key to our students’ long-term success,” says Bruce Barringer, head of the School of Entrepreneurship.

The classrooms in the new building will be designed for flexibility and interactivity. The furniture will be flexible to create any number of configurations and to incorporate small group exercises into class time. Today’s employers are looking for new hires who are capable of working collaboratively in small groups, so the curriculum is much more about hands-on or experiential learning. The new building will provide facilities to better prepare students for the workplace.

In addition, some classrooms will have video technology and the latest whiteboard technology.

“There are a lot of things now that we’re held back from doing because of the current facility, including how we teach students and how we interact with them,” Eastman says of the current Business Building, built in 1966.

“The architect team has been very helpful throughout the process in asking us to not think like we have in the past. I think it’s been a very liberating experience for everyone involved. Faculty may not realize that they can teach classes differently and interact with students differently. I think it really will open up a lot of venues for new opportunities and new innovations.”

Eastman believes Matthew Reiners and other future OSU business students will benefit the most from the new building.

“I think the new building will have a huge impact on existing faculty and students, but I really think of those future individuals and the impact it will have on their educations,” he says. “When we’re recruiting people they will come in and see this facility and everything that it has to offer. Our
faculty recruits will be dazzled, and future students amazed.
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“The new building will help us create a vibrant atmosphere where people want to be, they will want to work together, and they will want to coexist.”

The design of the building continues the Georgian tradition of the OSU campus and uses classical architecture in its symmetry, balance, proportion and human scale. Elements will include familiar campus features such as dormers and gables.
The new building will be the eastern bookend of the main quad and will include outdoor space for special events, including on football game days.
Hester Street will be remodeled to be pedestrian-friendly, the same as Monroe Street between University and Hall of Fame. Legacy Walk will end directly in front of the building. @

“The **new building** will help us create a vibrant atmosphere where people want to be, they will want to work together, and they will want to **coexist**.”

— Dean Ken Eastman

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