



Capital Development Committee

Legislative Council Staff

Nonpartisan Services for Colorado's Legislature

FISCAL YEAR 2026-27 CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION REQUEST

Western Colorado University
Leslie J. Savage Library Renovation

2023-019

Project Status

This project was first requested for funding in FY 2022-23. For FY 2015-16 through FY 2020-21, the university submitted requests for state funds and cash funds spending authority for a library renovation project that included elements of the current request. Those earlier requests were not funded. Portions of these earlier requests have been funded through grants and the controlled maintenance process. The project was not submitted for FY 2024-25. Starting with the FY 2025-26 request, the university has significantly increased the project's scope, and as a result the project has moved from a capital renewal project designation to a capital construction designation.

Table 1
Prioritization

Prioritized By	Priority	Notes
Western Colorado University	1 of 1	
Colorado Commission on Higher Education	12 of 28	
Office of State Planning and Budgeting	31 of 47	Not recommended for funding.

Table 2
Prior Appropriation and Request Information

Fund Source	Prior Appropriation	Budget Year FY 2026-27	Out Year FY 2027-28	Future Requests	Total Costs
CCF	\$0	\$43,576,953	\$0	\$0	\$43,576,953
CF	\$0	\$2,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$2,000,000
Total	\$0	\$45,576,953	\$0	\$0	\$45,576,953

FISCAL YEAR 2026-27 CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION REQUEST

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Table 3
Itemized Cost Information

Fund Source	Prior Appropriation	Budget Year FY 2026-27	Out Year FY 2027-28	Future Requests	Total Costs
Land Acquisition	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Professional Services	\$0	\$4,554,393	\$0	\$0	\$4,554,393
Construction	\$0	\$32,559,114	\$0	\$0	\$32,559,114
Equipment	\$0	\$3,298,137	\$0	\$0	\$3,298,137
Miscellaneous	\$0	\$1,021,950	\$0	\$0	\$1,021,950
Contingency	\$0	\$4,143,359	\$0	\$0	\$4,143,359
Total	\$0	\$45,576,953	\$0	\$0	\$45,576,953

Program Plan Status

Approved Program Plan: Yes

Date Approved: July 2020

FCI: 27

Project Description/Scope of Work

Western Colorado University (WCU) is requesting state funds and cash fund spending authority for a capital construction project to fully renovate Leslie J. Savage Library's 58,000-GSF addition, originally added in 1964. The project will modernize and reinvigorate a key campus building to better serve the needs of students, faculty, and the community, and will also address numerous deferred maintenance issues.

The project constructs a Student Success Center on the first floor by the main entry, which consolidates several campus academic resource programs into one location. Library program spaces will be moved to the 2nd and 3rd floors of the building. The project also adds private student study spaces, communal student work spaces, academic classrooms, and larger meeting spaces that can be used for campus events or rented out by conferences or community groups. Finally, the project constructs temperature-controlled display areas for art and artifacts from campus collections. The project modernizes all mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems; improves energy efficiency; brings the space up to ADA compliance; and improves life-safety issues at the entryways. Some of the mechanical and electrical system upgrades also affect parts of the original 1939 library. The project also addresses building envelope issues, including improving concrete building foundations to address water intrusion and upgrading exterior windows and doors.

Cost assumption. The university used a professional cost estimator to create its cost assumption. The cost per GSF is \$786. The project accounts for inflation at 10 percent for

FISCAL YEAR 2026-27 CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION REQUEST

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Leslie J. Savage Library Renovation

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professional services and equipment, and 21 percent for construction, all to the mid-point of construction. The project is in compliance with the Art in Public Places and High Performance Certification programs.

Table 4
Project Schedule

Project Component	Start Date	Completion Date
Design	August 2026	April 2027
Construction	July 2027	January 2029
Equipment	February 2029	February 2029
Occupancy	February 2029	February 2029

Project Justification

WCU explains that the 1964 addition to the library has had minimal upgrades since its construction and has numerous deferred maintenance issues. The mechanical and electrical systems are energy inefficient, near the end of their usable life, and at risk of failure. It is difficult for the university to find replacement parts for these obsolete systems. Boilers are at risk of failure, which could lead to temporary facility closure. None of the bathrooms in the building are ADA-compliant. The roof system does not adequately shed ice, leading to life-safety issues from snow and ice buildup at the entrances to the building as well as dangerous icicles over the entryways. The exterior envelope of the building has no insulation and existing windows are single-pane, aluminum-frame systems that perform poorly in both extreme heat and cold. The building's current Facility Condition Index (FCI) is 27, which the university says will be brought up to 95 with the completion of this project. FCI is a measure of the cost of remedying building deficiencies compared to a building's current replacement value, and the state architect's target FCI for all buildings is 85.

WCU also explains that the library is currently underutilized as it is designed around the needs of students in the 1960s. Large parts of the current facility are dedicated to physical book collections, with student support services scattered across campus in three different buildings. The university says consolidating and centralizing these programs in the library will improve student access and better serve student needs. New spaces created by the project will foster teamwork and collaboration, and will add to the classroom and meeting space inventory.

Project alternatives. WCU explored two project alternatives: demolishing the 1963 wing entirely and constructing a new building or renovating the building in phases. Demolishing and rebuilding the wing is cost prohibitive. Renovating in phases would involve less disruption to library operations, but is more expensive. The university's preferred option, as presented in this request, is to renovate in one phase, which requires the library to either move to a swing space

FISCAL YEAR 2026-27 CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION REQUEST

Western Colorado University
Leslie J. Savage Library Renovation

2023-019

or close during construction, but is the cheapest of the three options and completes the work in the least amount of time.

Program Information

The main portion of the Leslie J. Savage Library was designed in 1939 by Temple Hoyne Buell, and is the only designated historic building in Gunnison. An addition was constructed in 1964. The library houses Disability Services; the Office of Inclusivity, Equal Employment Opportunity & Affirmative Action; and the Office of Restorative Justice and Title IX. It serves as a hub for meetings, mentoring, and study groups, and services numerous academic programs in in demand fields. The university says the library is central to not only the university but to the community as well, since it hosts numerous public programming events each year. The Gunnison Rotary Club operates out of the library.

Source of Cash Funds

The source of cash funds for the project is an outside donor.

Operating Budget

Operating costs are paid from institutional sources. The university explains that the current costs to operate the building are very high due to the antiquated and inefficient systems, lack of insulation, and inefficient heating. WCU expects to save \$30,000 in operating costs annually with the energy efficiency improvements. The university also expects the new HVAC system to provide additional savings, potentially cutting the library's energy costs by 36 to 49 percent.

Staff Questions and Issues

None.