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Dear Friend :

We wish you a very happy new year for 2011 and would like to start it with this very special issue of the physics news letter, most of which is devoted to the recently finished renovation of the teaching spaces in the McMurry Science Building. As you may remember the physics department's proposal entitled "Flexible Instructional Space for Teaching Science Courses with emphasis on Inquiry and Collaborative Active Learning" was one of the two winning designs in the building renovation project.

In early November (after some construction delays) we were finally able to move into our newly renovated spaces. Some of you saw these spaces during our Homecoming Reception and some were able to attend the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony. However, if you did not make it to any of these events, we hope that this letter will give you at least some idea about how the physics areas look now. We also would like to extend our invitation to all of you to come here for a visit and we will be happy to give you a detailed tour of our facilities.



In this picture you can see renovated room S104 looking southwest. Many of you would remember it as the main lecture room where introductory physics lectures used to be delivered. Now it is primarily a laboratory space for introductory physics labs. The picture shows the room being set up for one of the thermodynamics experiments. You may notice the whiteboard surface going all the way around the room. So, pretty much any wall space in this room can be used for writing. The movable black board can be used by those who prefer chalk over markers. Four large screen TVs (only two are visible in this picture) are to be used by students in the lab to present their findings and discuss results with the instructor and

peers. With all students having tablet PCs, they could display data files, power point presentations as well as live data graphs collected during the lab experiment. All TVs in the room can also be used in the broadcast regime, allowing the instructor to project the same image on all TVs at once.



This picture shows the same room looking southeast. As you can see, the east wall of the room can be used as white board from the top to the bottom, but it is also a movable partition which separates room S104 from the room S105 next door. The partition can be removed to combine the two rooms together for larger classes, combined lecture/lab function or science alumni reception. Notice that all the tables in the room have wheels. They can be easily moved to be placed in different clusters to serve different functions. You can also see drop-down electric cords to provide electric power to table electric outlets in any configuration.



The above two pictures show both the east and the west view of S104A preparation room, which used to serve as a demonstration equipment room for S104 in the past. Now most of the new equipment for introductory physics labs is kept here.



These pictures show the south and the north views of room S105, which used to be the physics/astronomy lab, but now serves as the main lecture room for large size introductory physics courses. It also has all the flexible features described above (white board space, movable tables, and dropdown power cords). Both east and west walls are movable allowing us to connect this room with both S104 and S106 on the sides. You can also see four projectors (mounted in the ceiling) and one TV screen. All of them can be used for broadcasting the same or different images on different walls of the room to engage the audience in the active learning process. The movable chalk board in the south wall serves as the entrance to bring the large demonstration table into the room from the smaller demonstration/prep room shown in the next picture.



These pictures show the west and east views of the combined S105A and S106A preparation rooms. You

can see two large demonstration tables, one of which can be used in the lecture while the other being set up for the lecture to follow.

Room S106 is now the mirror reflection of room S104 on the other side of the lecture room, so we do not present its individual picture here, but instead the next several pictures should give you a feel for what the rooms look like when the separating partitions are open. To show how these partitions work, we have purposely left some of the partitions' sections in place, and opened the doors to the closet, where the partitions' panels are stored when they are not used.



Finally, this last picture here shows the renovated north hallway of the Science Building next to the physics department. The monitors on the wall are constantly used to broadcast posters made by the physics students as well as various physics-related video clips, announcements about physics department events, and useful building wide and campus wide information.

There were a number of other important events that took place this last fall. However, to keep this letter in reasonable size, we will address these events in our next spring news letter. You can always learn about the most recent events at the "McMurry Society of Physics Students" Face Book page.

Tikhon Bykov - Wayne Keith - Timothy Renfro, The McMurry Physics Department

Handwritten signature of Timothy Renfro.