



KANNAPOLIS - Construction for the Rowan-Cabarrus Community College's biotechnology building on the North Carolina Research Campus is ahead of schedule, said Jeff Owens, senior project executive for Turner Construction.

The community college's board of trustees took its first hard-hat tour of the building on Oct. 26, before its regular meeting.

Owens said the construction company has reached some critical milestones, with the roof on soon, utilities running to the building and all the major equipment at the construction site now.

Board members were pleased with the building's progress.

"I'm excited and looking forward to moving in there," said board chair Ray Paradowski. "It's opening up new doors for us in the biotech area."

The building's completion is scheduled for late spring or early summer and is expected to house students for the fall 2010 semester.

The new building will be the home for the college's two associate degree programs in biotechnology and agricultural biotechnology. It will also be used for continuing education programs related to biotechnology and clinical research.

Once it is finished, the biotechnology building will be 62,332 square feet at a cost of approximately \$26 million.

On Monday, board members walked through areas that will soon be laboratories, classrooms, an office for the president, a library and rooms for admissions, computer networking and conferences.

"To see it come out of the blueprints is exciting," RCCC President Carol Spalding said. "This will be state of the art and a building that will attract a lot of people."

Also on the tour was North Carolina Commissioner of Labor Cherie Berry, who later joined the board for a strategic conversation.

During the conversation, Berry mainly spoke of the department of labor's apprenticeship program, which more than 27,000 people have completed, she said.

Berry also said if she were to recommend a job to train for now, it would be one of the trades, such as carpentry or plumbing.

Berry and other participants said they were pleased with how the strategic conversation went.

"This was not a scripted event, so we learned a lot about the apprenticeship program and how valuable (Berry) thinks the trades are," Spalding said. "I was hoping she'd tell us what the future was for labor needs, but she doesn't have a crystal ball either."

- Contact reporter Jessica Groover: 704-789-9152