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Dowling's environmental science expansion gets boost

BY JENNIFER SMITH

jennifer.smith@newsday.com

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A push to expand environmental science programs at Dowling College got a recent boost when the college took over a waterfront marine laboratory at the former Bluepoints property in West Sayville.

The lab, and a new light-filled office upstairs, are the first physical steps toward the Oakdale college's goal of establishing a marine research center to monitor coastal waters and estuaries.

"The plan is for 10,000 square feet of facilities ... dealing with coastal issues from the tip of Brooklyn to the tip of Montauk," John Tanacredi, chairman of Dowling's earth and marine sciences department, said at a ribbon-cutting ceremony yesterday.

A \$250,000 grant from Assemb. Ginny Fields (D-Oakdale) will buy new lab supplies. Dowling has also drawn up plans for conversion of more space into classrooms and offices - as funding allows. "We're still looking into that," said provost Linda Ardito.

Still, by next summer, Tanacredi said the lab will be filled with horseshoe crabs and other invertebrates for research projects supporting the college's proposed graduate program in coastal environmental management. The program, scheduled to enroll students by spring of 2010, would offer a Master of Science degree for would-be environmental stewards and state and county environmental staffers looking for a mid-career boost in ecosystems management.

The curriculum is being developed and must go through a series of academic committees before it is submitted to the state for approval. "We're close," said Ardito, adding that Albany is also weighing a Dowling master's program in environmental microbiology.

The college leased the 2,000-square-foot lab space in August from Mark DeAngelis, whose family owns the adjacent West Sayville Boat Basin and bought the Bluepoints property in 2004.

Most recently, the lab had been occupied by researchers from Stony Brook University who needed a flowing seawater supply while their main facility at Flax Pond on the North Shore was undergoing renovations.

"I've always kept my eye on that facility" said Tanacredi. He added that the access to saltwater there, pumped up through on-site wells, is "priceless."

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