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Construction to begin at Horace Mann building and Meier Hall at Salem State

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Meier Hall at Salem State University - Salem, MA

Salem, MA Years of planning to unify and modernize Salem State University's footprint through SSU BOLD are coming to fruition, with construction beginning this spring and summer, and scheduled to finish in time for a fall 2027 opening. SSU BOLD, a campus unification and modernization project first announced in 2019, will see the relocation of programs from South Campus to North Campus as part of the university's end of use of South Campus. The work incorporates renovations to the existing Horace Mann building on Loring Ave. as part of that transition, as well as the expansion of Meier Hall on Lafayette St. to bring new lab spaces to programs housed in the building. BOLD also sees the commissioning of a second geothermal wellfield on campus to heat and cool the two newly built spaces, joining a field of wells previously installed in the quad at the heart of North Campus to heat and cool the Frederick E. Berry Library and Learning Commons.

“We are thrilled to embark on the construction phase of SSU BOLD – our ambitious campus unification and modernization project – while advancing the decarbonization of North Campus,” Salem State University president John Keenan said. “Though there is much work ahead, it is inspiring to see our vision take shape. We look forward to creating a modern, cohesive, and sustainable campus that will provide our students with the enriched learning environment they truly deserve and solidify our leadership in sustainability.”

SSU BOLD will revitalize the Horace Mann building, vacant since 2018, by transforming it into a facility for the majority of the Maguire Meservey College of Health and Human Services. Interior renovations will see the creation of nursing simulation suites, bedside skills and occupational therapy labs, student hubs, flexible classrooms, and more. Construction will also update the building with an accessible campus-facing entrance.

Horace Mann building at Salem State University - Salem, MA

The Meier Hall addition will bring seven new, high-intensity teaching labs and support spaces to Salem State. It will provide much needed modernized lab space for several programs in the Meier Hall building, including biology, chemistry, and geological sciences. As that unfolds, Salem State will also begin the North Campus decarbonization project by establishing a geothermal wellfield under the faculty parking lot on College Drive, adjacent to Meier Hall. Once completed, the system of about 100 wells will support the heating and cooling of both the Meier Hall expansion and Horace Mann building, as well as improvements to the heating and cooling of the Berry Library. As part of this effort, connections between other buildings and the wells will be installed in preparation for the second phase of this project, which will bring four additional buildings on North Campus into this system. The work about to begin represents a major milestone toward decarbonizing North Campus, as it allows two university buildings to heat and cool without relying on fossil fuels. It is also a milestone for the state, as the work is part of a case study run by the state’s Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM).

“For Salem State University to achieve its goals to be carbon neutral by 2050, large-scale projects are required to bring new state-of-the-art methods for heating and cooling buildings, such as the geothermal system being utilized in SSU BOLD,” Keenan said. “We are honored to have been selected by DCAMM for this pivotal project, which will become a test case informing and improving other decarbonization efforts across the Commonwealth.”

Salem State University is one of two campuses participating in decarbonization case studies with DCAMM, the other being the Massachusetts Maritime Academy. For that, Salem State will serve as a critical leader in the use of geothermal heating and cooling technology leading to expanded use on campuses state-wide.

“As the work to decarbonize North Campus moves forward, Salem State University will serve as an important model for decarbonization efforts that other campuses across the state can learn from,” said Luigi Marcone, assistant vice president for capital planning and facilities at Salem State. “Through that, we are advancing our own carbon-neutrality goals, as well as those of the entire Commonwealth. We are honored to serve in this role and are excited to move forward in partnership with DCAMM.”

All three construction projects – the Horace Mann Laboratory renovation, the Meier Hall addition, and the geothermal wellfield work – will run concurrently, though their starts will be staggered given the initial blasting necessary to remove ledge for the Meier Hall addition. The work on Horace Mann will begin this spring, while work on Meier Hall and the decarbonization project will launch during the summer. All three are expected to be completed by the summer of 2027, allowing the activation of Horace Mann and Meier Hall's addition for the fall 2027 semester.

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