



Despite the brisk winter weather, President Christina Paxson, Providence Mayor Angel Taveras and more than 30 others gathered Wednesday morning for the topping-off ceremony of the Building for Environmental Research and Teaching.

The ceremony took place outside of the renovated building, the former Hunter Laboratory, and included a series of speakers who were involved in the construction and planning process of the building. It also featured the harnessing of the final structural beam, which was signed by the attendees before being set in place. While the scheduled completion date for the renovation of the building is not until fall of 2013, the ceremony celebrated a landmark moment in the \$35 million project.

“Brown is committed to the adaptive reuse of buildings rather than tearing down to build from scratch,” Associate Provost and Professor of Engineering Rod Beresford told The Herald. The renovation of the building and its renaming marks a new stage in its history, he added.

The psychology faculty, the last group to inhabit the building, recently moved to the Metcalf Chemistry and Research Laboratory with the rest of the Department of Cognitive, Linguistic and Psychological Sciences. The renovated building will house faculty members hailing from fields including geology, economics, sociology, environmental science and engineering, Executive Vice President for Planning and Policy Russell Carey '91 MA'06 said at the ceremony.

The long-term vision is that the Building for Environmental Research and Teaching will be used mainly as a center for environmental studies, Beresford said. But the School of Engineering will be allotted space on the third floor.

“The new building will give a home to the people with environmental interests from various fields including engineering,” said Janet Blume, interim director at the Center for Environmental Studies and associate dean of the faculty. “The project is an affirmation of the University’s commitment to all things environmental and the ways in which the environment is studied from many perspectives,” Blume said.

The Herald reported in March that the goals of the renovation included improving the building’s indoor facilities and replacing the former greenhouse next to the building with a rooftop greenhouse on top of the building. The revamping of the interior, construction of new medium-duty laboratories and the design of a new rooftop greenhouse will provide state-of-the-art technology to aid in research, Beresford said. The new greenhouse is not only functional, but it will also provide a striking visual, he added.

The renovation marks a partnership between the University and Building Futures, a local nonprofit organization that aims to create construction jobs for low-income citizens of Providence, according to a University press release.

The organization has been integrated in 15 past University construction projects, according to the press release, and the partnerships have always taken place on a project-to-project basis. Building Futures will from now on be included in all projects over \$5 million in scope.

In his speech at the topping-off ceremony, Taveras praised the University’s efforts to work closely with Building Futures to strengthen the state’s economy and give back to the community.