

## Latest Addition

Picard Center will focus on making children's lives better

**T**HE CECIL J. PICARD CENTER for Child Development will bring together several groups who share a common goal: improving Louisiana by meeting the needs of its children.

It's under construction in University Research Park, adjacent to the Louisiana Immersive Technologies Enterprise on East Devalcourt Street.

Named in honor of Louisiana's superintendent of education from 1996-2007, the 40,000-square-foot building is expected to be completed within two years at a cost of about \$7.2 million.

The complex will house the university's:

- Center for Innovative Learning and Assessment Technologies;
- Educational Counseling unit;
- Educational Foundation and Leadership Department;
- Center for Gifted Education; and
- Department of Psychology.

The new facility will also include:

- the Loyd J. Rockhold Distance Education Conference Center;
- a research library; and
- a data and technology analysis unit.

The Cecil J. Picard Center for Child Development was established in 2005 at UL Lafayette after five years of development. Now in temporary offices in O.K. Allen Hall, it employs about 20 evaluation and research professionals who concentrate on issues such as early childhood and k-12 education, health and lifelong learning.

The center's staff is probably best known for evaluating programs, such as LA 4, the state's early childhood education initiative, and Reading First, which is intended to help schools improve children's reading achievement by using scientifically proven instruction methods.

National collaborations include work with the RAND Corporation to

track schools' short-term and long-term assistance to children displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005.

As the center expands the scope of its work, it will focus on tracking children's educational progress in Louisiana from birth to age 25.

"We are well on our way to becoming the national model for child development centers," said Dr. Billy Stokes, the center's director. "With the access to data we currently have, we are undoubtedly the best resource for educational information in Louisiana."

The center's financial support has included donations by Loyd J. Rockhold and the Special Children's Foundation, and includes:

- the Loyd J. Rockhold Endowed Chair
- the Paula Chavers Rockhold Eminent Scholar Endowed Chair in Child Development;



Cecil J. Picard

- the Special Children's Endowed Professorship; and
  - a \$2 million donation earmarked for building the facility.
- The center also receives support from the Cecil Picard Endowment through the Community Foundation of Acadiana.

Then-Gov. Kathleen Blanco spoke at a groundbreaking ceremony in December. "I

can think of no better way to cement Cecil Picard's legacy than to continue the groundbreaking work he began with early childhood education," she said.

Picard had the third-longest tenure of a state superintendent of education in Louisiana and was the catalyst for many nationally recognized educational initiatives.

He was a teacher, coach and principal in Vermilion Parish and later served in the Louisiana House of Representatives and Louisiana Senate. ■

 [ccd-web.louisiana.edu](http://ccd-web.louisiana.edu)



Construction of the Cecil J. Picard Center began in December.