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## Community

### Steadying campus buildings

University system aims to upgrade structures and prevent catastrophes

By KYLE ODEGARD

Gazette-Times reporter

When Nash Hall was built on the Oregon State University campus in 1968, two huge concrete slabs were stored between the sixth-floor ceiling and the roof in case the building was ever expanded from six to eight stories.

What seemed like a good idea decades ago has become a nightmare in an era of increased earthquake awareness.

With shaking from a huge quake, the extra 6.8 million pounds could cause the building to “pancake,” or collapse from the roof down.

A \$1.6 million project to stabilize Nash Hall started in July, and adding steel pins, frames and concrete to three of its corners should be wrapped up before fall term starts, said John Gremmels, design and construction senior project manager for Oregon State University.

“It is a major contribution to the safety of our students and faculty,” OSU President Ed Ray said during a presentation about the project on Thursday. He added that at any given time, about 500 students could be in Nash Hall, which is home to fisheries and wildlife and microbiology programs.

This likely won’t be the last seismic upgrade of a building at OSU.

A massive subduction zone earthquake offshore is a when, not an if, and the Oregon University System is trying to prevent catastrophes by upgrading campus buildings.

The university system hopes to seismically improve 10 buildings per biennium during the next 25 years at its seven schools. The system includes more than 1,100 buildings worth more than \$3 billion.

Six projects to seismically improve and do regular renovations on campus buildings are scheduled for this biennium. Earthquake prevention measures are 15 to 20 percent of the \$90 million budgeted, said Bob Simonton, Oregon University System director of capital construction.

The Nash Hall project included \$1.4 million from a Federal Emergency Management Agency grant.

The Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries has identified six other OSU buildings most in need of earthquake-related improvements.



**Casey Campbell | Gazette-Times**  
**Three corners of Nash Hall at Oregon State University will be stabilized as part of a \$1.6 million seismic upgrade of the building. The project should be completed by fall term.**

Up to 30 buildings on campus could eventually get seismic-reinforcement work, said Yumei Wang, geotechnical engineer for the agency.

"Earthquakes are something that are 100 percent going to happen in the future," Wang said.

More than 75 percent of OSU buildings are 25 years or older, and thus predate current seismic regulations, said Vincent Martorello, facilities director.

Oregon Senate President Peter Courtney, described as a champion of earthquake preparedness efforts by Ray and others, said it was difficult to keep interest in the issue.

"We've got a long way to go," he said.

Additional seismic upgrades and deferred maintenance are scheduled for Nash Hall starting in 2009, Gremmels said.

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#### SEISMIC SPOTS

These six buildings on the OSU campus have been identified as the most in need of seismic improvements. Five are unreinforced masonry buildings.

- Women's Building
- Covell Hall
- Strand Agriculture Hall
- Batcheller Hall
- Milam Hall
- Wilkinson Hall

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