

Daily Texan

06/12/13

During warm summer months, UT restores decade-old air conditioning systems



Construction workers move pieces up the stairs in Parlin Hall on Monday afternoon.

[Photo Credit: William Crites-Krumm](#) | Daily Texan Staff

Published on June 12, 2013 at 5:26 pm Last update on June 13, 2013 at 1:23 pm

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Walking into the cold, crisp gust of an air-conditioned room and escaping the searing Texas heat is a moment of relief for many returning students in the Fall, and updated air conditioning systems in aging buildings will keep them cool.

Facility Service is working to update the cooling system in various older building on campus, operating with aged equipment more than 40 years old, through the Renovation and Renewal Program. The program funds construction and renovation projects to sustain and improve facility use. The renovation project is being overseen by Project Management & Construction Services.

The buildings with current air conditioning renovations include Parlin Hall and Calhoun Hall.

Aziz Hussaini, the project manager for Parlin and Calhoun and architecture graduate student, said the system cooling the buildings consists of fans blowing air over coils chilled by cold water. Hussaini said the component pieces can wear down, corrode and lose efficiency over the years.

Hussaini said the addition of technology and equipment in classrooms and offices has increased the amount of heat in the building over the years, which the old system struggles to cool.

The renovation would replace the system with a more efficient digitally-controlled unit and expand space needed for maintenance, costing \$700,000 for Parlin and \$1.5 million for Calhoun.

“When the original systems were put in they didn’t take into account ease of access for maintenance and since we want these to be here for another 40 years we are making sure there is space for that,” Hussaini said. “The air conditioning systems were in dire poor conditions. We get to building when it’s on its last legs and we’re trying to renovate when we will have the least amount of impact.”

Hussaini said the renovations process includes precautionary measures to preserve the condition of the buildings completed in 1956 and 1968, as well as a temporary air unit to allow faculty to continue working, although no classes are housed there currently.

The stone facade and stairwells of the building were covered with cardboard and pile wood to avoid damage.

“We protect the outside wall, we protect the stairs so everything remains in the same conditions,” Hussaini said. “We’ve heard of contractors that have banged up these old limestone buildings bringing in construction materials, so we’re making sure to protect that. We don’t want the system to work great and mess up the building along the way.”

Michael Debow, associate director for project management, said although it is the hottest time of the year, the renovations are scheduled for the summer when classes and research is less often disturbed. He said the systems are investments aimed to last decades and conserve energy through digital controls.

“The digital control allows us to provide the level of comfort need and limit it when it’s not needed is saving energy by not having those highly controlled temperature on all the time,” Debow said. “We’re trying to updates these older building too continue serving the University and increasing the energy efficiency.”

Ana Thiemer, Replacement and Renewal program manager, said the new system will be 25 to 45 percent more efficient than the original.

Hussaini said the project will be completed in mid August in anticipation for the fall semester.

“If we were changing the wall we would get a lot more feed back, but changing out the air conditioning system and when students come back with cool air and they won’t even notice the difference,” Hussaini said. “They might not have noticed us coming in before to fix it every Saturday.”

Clarification: This article has been updated to show that Project Management & Construction Services is running the renovation.

