

These Walls: Tulsa Community College Glenpool Campus

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Tulsa Community College converted Glenpool's old city hall into its West Campus. A unique confluence of events brought Tulsa Community College into one of its area's fastest-growing suburbs.

When a retail study of Glenpool's demographics uncovered that residents had a lower percentage of college credits than the state average, city leaders decided to approach TCC about expanding into their south Tulsa community. So then-Mayor J. Shayne Buchanan approached TCC President Thomas K. McKeon about the idea, only to find the college was already contemplating such a move based on its own mission study by Denver-based Paulien and Associates.

"If TCC was to be able to grow and offer our services, we needed to look in suburban areas," said Peggy Dyer, provost of the college's West Campus. "Glenpool was one of those areas that Paulien and Associates said would be ripe for TCC to spread our wings in that community." As these thoughts aligned, Glenpool charted still another step forward: construction of a 60,000-square-foot convention center at Tapp Development's Southwest Crossroads retail complex, with half of the space providing offices for a new city hall. That opened the door for Glenpool to lease its old, 14,800-square-foot city hall to TCC. "It kind of was a marriage made in heaven," said Glenpool City Manager Ed Tinker.

Converting the two-story steel building presented a few challenges, from accommodating continuing city operations through the move to deciding what to do with its four jail cells. But the 28-year-old building that once met urgent care needs remained structurally sound, making the primary issue one of reconfiguring a bunch of individual offices into useable classrooms. The college accomplished this in three phases, tapping multiple contractors and its own in-house talents, said Dyer, who also oversees Glenpool operations. The college retained the elevators and infrastructure to the two-story building, gutting or renovating everything else.

"It was really broken-up space," said Kinslow, Keith and Todd interior designer Liz Rohrbacker, who worked on the first-floor renovation. "Their whole goal was to make it very open and inviting, to get all these broken-up spaces and open it up so that the public could utilize the space." Since the first floor and second-floor courtroom remained in use, TCC started with the second-floor offices, forging from that shell four small, intimate classrooms accommodating 15 to 17 students apiece. Upon finishing those spaces TCC started offering Glenpool classes in the spring of 2008, even as it transformed the courtroom into a larger classroom for 30 to 35 students. Glenpool's city hall move then allowed TCC to renovate the first floor. Contractor Builder's Unlimited of Tulsa tackled demolition of the concrete and bars encasing the jail cells, turning the space into restrooms. "They were solid, reinforced concrete block, 8 to 12 inches thick," Rohrbacker said.

"And concrete 18 inches above that," KKT principal Patrick Keith said of the ceiling. "It was interesting watching the contractor do that." The first floor provided TCC three classrooms for 25 to 30 students, a computer laboratory and administrative space for the campus staff. "We wanted it to be welcoming," Dyer said. "There's a room in there where students can congregate and have small group discussions.

"And to the west area we created an outdoor space," she said. "We created that as an outdoor sitting space for students to be engaged and converse and have part of the social life of a campus." Completed last fall at a cost of \$920,000, TCC has already offered 187 credit classes at the 140 W. 141st St. campus, conveniently located just off U.S. Highway 75. Enrollment totaled 1,354 students. "It's been great," said Dyer, noting that TCC also offers a plethora of non-credit courses there. "We've had a lot of foot traffic that would walk into the building just to walk in and see what was going on." New studies show Glenpool no longer trails the state average for resident college credits – marking quick results from a five-year lease that started at just \$1,000 a month and ends at \$3,000 a month.

"We are so pleased with this deal," Tinker said. "And they're just now getting started. Truly they're going to be great in the future."