BC expands further into sciences with gift from Apple executive

By **Deirdre Fernandes** GLOBE STAFF NOVEMBER 03, 2017

Boston College's efforts to elbow into the ranks of the nation's top research institutions will get a big boost from a senior Apple executive and a new science institute focused on issues of energy, health and the environment. The Jesuit college will begin construction on the $150 million lab and classroom facility in 2019 and plans to open it two years later, BC officials are scheduled to announce Friday.

The facility will be called the Schiller Institute for Integrated Science and Society, after Phil Schiller, a Newton native and a senior vice president at Apple, who has been responsible for marketing many of the technology company's high-profile products, from the Mac computer to the iPhone. Schiller, a 1982 BC graduate and his wife, Kim Gassett-Schiller, are giving $25 million toward the construction of the new institute.

Schiller said he hopes that the institute will "lift up BC's scientific program to a whole other level. . . . I want them to be known for great science."

BC has been a traditional liberal arts school with more than two-thirds of its undergraduates receiving degrees in the humanities and social sciences, such as economics and political science. But the college is trying to expand programs in the hard sciences and raise its profile in research to attract more students.

In 2016, BC joined an elite group of 115 US universities known for their intense research work. The designation put BC in the same bracket as several other Boston-area higher education institutions, including Tufts University, Boston University, Harvard University, and MIT, when it comes to research on campus.

As part of building the Schiller Institute, BC will also create new undergraduate majors in engineering and applied science, said David Quigley, BC provost and dean of faculties. The school also plans to hire more than 20 faculty members to be based at the institute.

Currently, 25 percent of undergraduates leave Boston College with a degree in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics.
Schiller was among that group. He majored in biology and planned to become a marine biologist. However, when he went to California for graduate school, he decided that biology wasn't for him.
It turned out other classes and electives that he took at BC, including computer science, were more helpful in helping him land a job, Schiller said.
That combination of humanities and science that BC will be able to offer students will be a key to the institute's success, Schiller said.
The institute will try to bring biology, chemistry, English, and history majors together to address problems like climate change and disease in the developing world. Their work will be aimed to develop technologies to provide clean water and energy and reduce poverty, school officials said.

BC is not the only area college investing in space that allows students and faculty from different fields to collaborate. Earlier this fall, Boston University announced the opening of its Rajen Kilachand Center for Integrated Life Sciences & Engineering, a nine-story, $135-million facility that houses the school's life scientists, engineers, and physicians. The researchers, graduate students, and staff at BU's center are also working on issues of health, environment, and energy.

Deirdre Fernandes can be reached at deirdre.fernandes@globe.com.
Follow her on Twitter @fernandesglobe.