A GROUNDBREAKING CHANGE

Nochur Sankar Science Center construction will force adjustments on campus

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Photo by Jackson Napier

Marking the first step in a 15-month-long journey, the Nochur Sankar Science Center broke ground on Feb. 3 in the administrative parking lot. Projected to be completed in the fall of 2025, the 35,000-square-foot building will house enhanced learning opportunities in the sciences, engineering and mathematics. However, the facility's construction will cause significant disruptions to campus activities.

With the administrative parking lot designated as the construction site, the loss of 52 faculty parking spaces prompts the relocation of faculty parking to Chapel Point, which has been terraformed to adequately accommodate extra vehicles.

Despite efforts to mitigate lost parking spaces through the expansion of Chapel Point, the construction's staging area, where materials and machinery are organized and stored, complicates matters. Given the necessity for the construction crew to have their machinery as close to the build site as possible, the faculty parking spaces behind Brokaw and Ellis Hall, which are typically at full capacity, will be cut off from Trinity Prep Lane and therefore inaccessible.

The challenge of limited available faculty parking is compounded by the necessity for faculty to cross through heavy carline traffic from Chapel Point to reach campus.

"There's a reason why Chapel Point is designated as the overflow parking lot," junior Connor Nanus said.

The construction of the Sankar Science Center will not only affect available parking spaces for faculty, but for students as well. While seniors will have designated parking spaces, parking will not be guaranteed for juniors and sophomores due to faculty taking up spaces in the parking lot outside the Race Athletic Center and the Dickinson Activity Center.

"There's always been parking problems, especially during the second semester when sophomores are able to drive," Nanus said. "With class sizes growing, especially the record-breaking sophomore class, that will become even more of a problem."

This strain on available parking will be amplified during evening athletic events, as throngs of non-Trinity vehicles will face limited parking options. This situation is further exacerbated due to the baseball field parking, which was previously the secondary designated overflow parking area, now being transformed into another staging area.

Three Board of Directors members, Head of School Byron Lawson, main donors, and two members of the development office ceremoniously hold shovels in anticipation for the Nochur Sankar Science Center groundbreaking.

Parking and traffic control are interdependent, posing challenges for drop-off and pick-up when either encounters issues.

Beginning the Sankar Science Center's construction will impede drop-off and pick-up activities on the driveway outside of the Student Resource Center (SRC) and Maughan Education Center. In response, vehicles will be directed down Hubbard Field Way, around the roundabout, and back up where students will eventually be dropped off and picked up in front of the RAC and DAC.

Vehicles will then exit through the back of the student parking lot, which had previously been blockaded. However, this new driveway is slightly less linear footage than outside the SRC, as it eventually merges into a single lane.

"It will probably become a little bit more congested," Associate Head of School Dennis Herron said.

This situation may become a permanent fixture on campus due to existing regulations on concrete surfaces, leaving no space for additional carpool areas.

Beyond affecting parking and traffic, the construction is anticipated to generate considerable noise, particularly affecting students in the SRC.

"Students will be walking within 100 feet of [construction], so there's going to be noise," Head of School Byron Lawson said.

With the goal of keeping disruptions to a minimum, specific days throughout the year will be designated for no construction activities. Furthermore, the majority of the construction is slated to occur during the upcoming summer.

Many details of the project remain in flux, but the construction committee will likely need to adapt in response to unforeseen obstacles as they arise.

"[Construction] will be challenging," Herron said. "But [the building] is going to fit right in."