

THE HERALD-DISPATCH EDITORIAL

Big changes in the works at MU's business college

The Elizabeth McDowell Lewis College of Business at Marshall University received the largest donation in its history recently when Brad Smith, CEO and chairman of software company Intuit, and his wife, Alys, announced they were giving the school \$25 million.

The donation allows the business school to modernize its curriculum and begin planning for a new building near campus. The donation is a large gift, but it should be considered the first step in a process to overhaul business education at Marshall, said Avinandan Mukherjee, dean of the College of Business.

"Brad's gift is a challenge gift," Mukherjee said in a telephone interview.

The donation is the result of several months of conversations "sharing a common goal of where we want to take the College of Business going forward," he said. The plan is to set up the College of Business for excellence and competing with the best business schools in the nation, Mukherjee said.

"We are really trying to build a next-generation curriculum that will attract students from all over the country and all over the world," Mukherjee said.

Mukherjee said the donation is the first step in a five-part process to meet that goal. The first step is developing what he calls an integrative, innovative



Sholten Singer/The Herald-Dispatch

Avinandan Mukherjee, dean of the Lewis College of Business at Marshall University, says the recent donation of \$25 million by Brad and Alys Smith is the first step of what should be a transformation of business education at Marshall.

curriculum design to meet the needs of the high-demand sectors of the economy. Those include entrepreneurship, design thinking, economic development and integrated business processes and technology, he said.

To accomplish this, the College of Business is developing a new curriculum for both the undergraduate and the graduate programs, Mukherjee said.

The second part is building a portfolio of skill development and experiential learning. This will take education beyond the classroom as high-profile business people are brought in to teach. Classes will interact with companies and perform case studies and problem solving, Mukherjee said.

"Fractional" credit courses — for example, a 1.5-credit course taught by a business person — will be geared to things in high demand in the job market.

Third is a focus on leadership skills — thinking strategically, team playing, stakeholder management and social skills, Mukherjee said. All will be measured and assessed, as Smith is a strong believer in them, Mukherjee said.

Fourth is global and external engagement. The College of Business already has partnerships in other countries, but it will expand into more and will grow its study abroad and faculty exchange programs, he said.

The academic goals are being developed with the expectation the new curriculum will launch during the fall semester of 2020, Mukherjee said.

Fifth is a new building for the College of Business. The world is changing fast,

and the College of Business' space in Corbly Hall is no longer adequate for the changes that need to be made, Mukherjee said.

Mukherjee said he foresees a building with a room for case studies, a simulation lab, a sales trading room, a corporate board room and other space suitable for the curricular changes that are coming.

"We want to bring people in. We want them to use our facility and use that as a hub for interacting with our students and interacting with our faculty," Mukherjee said.

"All of this is with the objective of being a major player both regionally and nationally."

Mukherjee said a tentative location has been selected along 4th Avenue across Hal Greer Boulevard from Old Main, but it has not been pinned down.

The Lewis College of Business has a long way to go to achieve its goal of national prominence. It will take more work and more resources. But other programs at Marshall have achieved that stature, so this goal of Mukherjee and Smith just might be attainable if donors and officials at the local, state and national levels work to make it happen.

"It is a re-imagination of the college," Mukherjee said. "We are looking at an extremely bright future for the College of Business."