Dane Slaughter, Anderson University’s vice president for facilities, has taken a keen interest in meteorology of late.

It is Slaughter’s task to coordinate the process of erecting the $15.2 G. Ross Anderson Student Center in the heart of the school’s campus.

But before breaking ground on that project, which is likely to require at least 14 months, the school must complete phase I of the campus expansion — the addition of a recreational pool and the relocation of a softball field and tennis courts.

Slaughter once hoped for an early spring completion of those projects, which cover 16.8 acres. But on Wednesday, it appeared that a June 1 completion date is more likely.

Chances of an early completion were washed away by some infrequent but heavy winter rains. Six times in the last six weeks of 2014, the campus was hit with more than a half-inch of rain — including 2.35 inches on one late-December day.

“You’re talking about an area of almost 17 acres. That’s a lot of mud. When you get a heavy rain on clay that is flat, the water just sits there. We have to wait three days for it to dry out,” Slaughter said.

Slaughter said about 95 percent of the site work has been completed for the softball field, which will provide the university with a synthetic surface more often found at larger schools.

About 70 percent of the site work has been completed for the tennis courts. The area under construction will eventually accommodate 12 courts, including eight that should be completed this spring.

“Once we get out of the dirt, we’ll be able to move a lot faster,” Slaughter said.
The pool is expected to accommodate 300 swimmers and will be used primarily during summer camps. The school has no plans to initiate a competitive swimming program. The first summer camp on the schedule is the annual Boys State convention June 7-13.

“Even with the weather challenges, we’re pretty much on schedule,” Slaughter said Wednesday. “But we’re not on pace to get it done early.”

The proposed student center will be built at the site of the current softball field. To have completion by the time students arrive for the 2016-17 school year, a summer start is needed.

At more than 80,000 square feet, the proposed student center will be the largest building on campus — and the most complex to build.

It will include three commercial kitchens, a bookstore, a fitness center, a high-ceiling atrium, a 400-seat banquet hall, a 400-seat theater, and a global media center.

“That’s a very complex building. A lot of electronics,” said Slaughter, who has been preparing for the infrastructure changes for three years.

“All the electrical wiring, and all the water lines, had to be redone, in part because of greater demands and also because of age,” Slaughter added. “Most of the underground infrastructure was at least 50 years old.”

Facility growth was fueled by the school’s enrollment boom of late. In the last 12 years, the enrollment at the Southern Baptist school has doubled.

According to a 2014 Chronicle of Higher Education report, Anderson has been the nation’s 18th-fastest growth rate over the past dozen years among private schools. The university’s enrollment swelled to 2,922 students in 2014 from 1,639 in 2002. Anderson was the only private university in South Carolina named to the Chronicle list.

Enrollment is expected to reach 3,100 mark this fall, school officials said.

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