Two years ago, Lee Hall’s Bettersworth Auditorium received extensive renovation. Though the auditorium now has larger, more comfortable seats than it had 100 years ago, the two-balcony facility has otherwise returned to its 1910 splendor.

Then in the fall semester of 2011, Provost Jerry Gilbert announced that the rest of Lee Hall, at long last, will receive a major renovation, a $21M project that will take 18 months to complete. The architects, Dale Partners of Jackson, have drawn plans that will preserve the grand, early twentieth-century style in all entry ways and hallways, featuring lofty ceilings, handsome moldings, and ornate light fixtures, all in keeping with the auditorium. In contrast, faculty offices and classrooms will sport state-of-the art furnishings and electronics.

By the spring semester of 2014, our department will move back to an elegant Lee Hall; we will occupy the entire second floor, with the President’s offices on the fourth floor, the offices of the Provost and Research on the third floor, and the Department...
of Classic and Modern Languages and Literature on the first floor. The ground floor will house three large wired classrooms as well a staff lounge and areas for electrical and mechanical maintenance.

Before we return to the Lee Promised Land, we will experience a three-semester exile in Howell Hall, a 1940s-vintage building that will one day receive its own renovation and become part of the School of Art, Architecture and Design.

Our trek to Howell will begin at the end of the spring 2012 semester, when our department—as well as the Department of Classic and Modern Languages and Literatures, the Dean of Students, the Vice President for Student Affairs, and all other occupants—must vacate our marvelous but dilapidated Lee Hall. While we won’t miss its leaky plumbing and pealing paint, we will surely miss our Place.

By the fall semester of 2012, then, Howell will house both our department and Languages. Our department includes 23 professors, 11 instructors, 22 lecturers, 21 teaching assistants, and two secretaries; Languages has nearly half that many folks. As a result, most professors and instructors will find themselves with an office-mate. Further, most of our lecturers and TAs will also work from Howell, but the lack of office space will mean that they will do their electronic work in a computer lab and their conferring with students in large rooms dedicated to this purpose.

Additionally, our Writing Center will move to the Harpole House on President’s Circle, near Allen Hall. This comfortable home will meet the needs of our booming Writing Center; it will also house Sarah Sneed, the director, as well as several instructors. Eventually, the Provost wants to move our Writing Center to the new classroom building currently on the drawing board.

So we will be inconvenienced and crowded. But, in good Faulknerian fashion, we will not only “endure” but “prevail” over the displacement, knowing that by 2014 we will return to our beloved Lee Hall—and that we’ll be in much better shape after all the walking from Howell to our classes off the Drill Field, near Lee Hall, our Center.

Rich Raymond
Department Head