The study of the humanities is at the heart of a liberal arts education. How fitting it was then that on a beautiful fall afternoon in October that Birmingham-Southern, one of the nation’s best liberal arts colleges, dedicated a completely renovated building on campus that is now devoted entirely to the humanities academic programs.

A $4.3 million renovation project begun in June 2002 has converted the college’s Phillips Science Building into a center to accommodate the academic needs of the Division of Humanities. The renovation became possible when the 100,000 square-foot Elton B. Stephens Science Center opened on campus in June 2002.

The four-story building now houses the academic programs of the Classics, English, History, Modern Foreign Languages, Philosophy, and Religion.

“The humanities are at the heart of a distinctive liberal arts education such as that offered at Birmingham-Southern,” says BSC Chancellor and President Dr. Neal R. Berte. “Therefore, it was imperative that we bring together the entire humanities faculty and programs into a single teaching, learning, and research center that incorporates the modern learning environment and the state-of-the-art technology that is required of today’s humanities curriculum and that is needed by our graduates as they enter many diverse career fields or advanced educational pursuits.”

W. Michael Atchison, a 1965 history graduate and chairman of the college’s Board of Trustees, told those gathered for the dedication of the renovated facility on Oct. 2 that the project was especially meaningful to him as a humanities major.

“If you were in the Phillips Science Building before it became the Humanities Center—and I spent plenty of time there when I was a student—then you will understand the need to renovate this facility,” said Atchison, an attorney and senior partner with the firm of Starnes and Atchison in Birmingham. “Providing the humanities disciplines with a single, modern, and state-of-the-art facility in which our faculty can teach and nurture and our students can learn and grow is a tremendous benefit for our college and the accomplishment of its mission.”

Prior to the dedication ceremonies, the Board of Trustees unanimously approved the renaming of the renovated facility on the academic quadrangle as the Neal and Anne Berte Humanities Center.

The Phillips Science Building, which had housed the college’s science program since its original construction in 1951, was named in memory of Birmingham businessman and longtime college supporter M. Paul Phillips, whose contribution made the facility possible. A portion of the common area of the Berte Humanities Center continues to recognize Mr. Phillips.

The general contractor for the renovation project was Brice Building Company of Birmingham, and the architect was Garrison Barrett Group of Birmingham.