

Livingston Campus Student Center at Rutgers

Student-driven project begins campus rebirth

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Originally low and flat in scale, the building was transformed into a two-story facility with a form that will relate to future campus buildings.

It also needed a clear identity and purpose, as at other Rutgers campuses. With 1,500 new beds on the way, more gathering places were needed, says Jeff Livingston, university architect (but not the campus's namesake). The existing center had little activity and "inadequate space to do nearly anything. ... The building didn't have an edge. There wasn't a place for people to meet, greet, and exchange ideas." Not to mention, it "almost turned its back on the campus," he says. Most windows—on one end of the center within a lecture hall—were almost always draped.

Students wanted more from their campus. They organized to formally request newer, effective space, according to the architectural team at The Biber Partnership. Officials answered the call. In 2007, Rutgers President Richard McCormick led a group to develop the project—and a vision for Livingston. "I have never seen such a grass roots effort on the part of students to make a project happen," says Tony Calcado, VP of facilities and capital planning. "They made this their building, their oasis. I am proud of them for that, and I am proud of the administration for listening and responding." The new Livingston purpose: Bring together the schools of business, management and labor relations, education, and social work.



• **SOLUTION:** At first, plans called for a single building for an expanded student center and a new dining commons, but the project team opted for a separate dining building (to be completed afterward and attached via a bridge). The center remained open during construction and is now 62,000 square feet. Sustainable design features include exterior ceramic frit glazing to cut down on heat gain and glare within the center, and interior finishes of quickly regenerating woods and other sustainable materials. The building meets LEED Silver standards.

But does it meet student expectations? "The former building was something that they passed through. This building is something that they stop in," Jeff Livingston says. His favorite spots are the two-story corner lounges, which have "great light at the end of the day." Architectural firm Principal Peter Biber says what helped most in bringing new life to the campus were gathering spaces, a new food court, the juxtaposition of passive and active spaces, and the expansive lobby that joins all the spaces and "has become a major place for social interaction and study."

- **COST:** \$17.5 million
- **OPENED:** April 2010
- **ARCHITECT:** The Biber Partnership, AIA, Summit, N.J.

The Livingston campus of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey was in need of a new identity. Thanks to a push from students and the vision of leaders, it's well on its way to becoming a center for professional education.

• **FUNCTION:** Student center with social, recreational, dining, and learning spaces, plus a flexible theater space allowing for five different event configurations

• **PROBLEM:** The campus (Rutgers' quietest one, located adjacent to a 520-acre ecological preserve) had a 35,000-square-foot student center, but the mid-80s-era building needed more space, and new life.

Breaking Ground: Other Places

- Construction of a student commons building at Sacred Heart University (Conn.). The 46,000-square-foot, V-shaped facility, set into a hillside, will link the upper and lower campuses. It will contain a dining hall seating 250, a 50-seat dining area, the campus bookstore, a computer services center, social spaces, and conference rooms. The \$17 million project, designed by Sasaki Architects, is planned for early 2012 completion.
- Addition to and renovation of the Communication Arts Building at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside. It will house expanding music, theater, and arts programs and include a new entrance and pre-assembly lobby, as well as a recital hall, music library, and black-box studio theater. The \$34 million project includes 91,000 square feet of renovated space and 72,000 square feet of new construction. Designed by HGA Architects and Engineers, it is slated for fall 2011 occupancy.