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How Facilities Affect Academic Brand: a conversation with university leaders across the nation



There is nothing quite like the energy and excitement of a new facility on campus. Increasingly, college and university leaders are seizing the star power of new facilities to improve image, boost enrollment and lift their institutions into top tier competition. Heery spoke with several leaders across the country to find out how facilities are becoming one of the most powerful marketing tools in today's academic marketplace.

It's no accident the new Architecture Building at Georgia's Southern Polytechnic State University appears on nearly every one of the university's marketing brochures. According to University President Lisa Rossbacher, the facility plays a central role in how the university presents itself to students and the community.

"We see this new building as a great opportunity to make a statement about our institution and about our teaching," says Rossbacher. "It's about technology, design, collaboration and transparency—those are words we use to describe the university as well."

The award-winning 80,000 SF building, designed by Heery and opened in 2002, replaced a poorly designed, outdated facility built in the 1960s. The new building is a flexible and fluid learning space, providing classrooms, studios, gallery, jury and presentation space, and a rooftop project

area accessible for photography and model studies. Small group gathering spaces in classrooms and hallways encourage spontaneous conversations and collaboration. The internal systems of the building are exposed and visible, allowing the facility to act as a teaching tool.

Says Rossbacher, "This facility expresses how we approach architecture and how we expect students to work together collaboratively, both now and in their later careers."

The Architecture Building powerfully illustrates how a new facility can impact enrollment. Soon after the newly designed building opened its doors, student enrollment in the architecture program skyrocketed 145 percent.

"We know if a person visits our campus and sees this facility, the chances they'll apply and enroll are incredibly high," confirms Rossbacher.

A facility speaks volumes

In this day and age, college leaders are acutely aware of what is needed to be competitive. Beyond high quality faculty and excellent academics, an institution's most important marketing tool is student life amenities. According to Sandra Emerick, former associate dean of students at Ohio's Cleveland State University (CSU), a student center, residence hall, or

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recreation facility can send a strong message about how the school values students.

“The facilities on campus can really set the tone for the culture of the campus community,” says Emerick. “If you have a dilapidated facility with poor lighting and technology it communicates a negative culture of care.”

In 2010, Emerick helped open CSU’s new student center, a light-filled facility with a three-story atrium, multiple skylights and abundant glass, exposing views of the surrounding city. With its cyber lounge and game room, dining areas, student organization spaces and large ballroom, the center was designed to promote interaction and conversation among students, faculty, staff, and the entire community.

“We wanted to create a new presence, a revitalized brand for CSU,” says Emerick. On recent campus tours, she found donors and recruits were awestruck by the facility. “The student center has become the iconic center of campus. It illustrates that we are a vital, forward-thinking university, not only for the students who use the student center but also for Cleveland’s community members, who see our campus as an important part of the city’s landscape.”

Reaching recruits wirelessly

An essential way colleges like CSU reach out to recruits is through wireless technology. More than any other element of design, a facility’s technology brands the college as “tuned-in” to how students operate in the 21st century.

“These students are coming in with a wireless view of the world,” says Tom Woodward, Heery vice president and director for many of the firm’s higher education projects. “It’s important that everything be available in their apps, on their portable devices, and that they be able to see multiple ways to plug in their laptops and share information with each other.”

Without these options, the building—and by implication, the institution—is seen as an impediment, says Woodward. “Technology helps students process information and feel more supported on campus.”

The “wow” factor

Wireless technology is one of the premium ways The University of Texas in Austin (UT) attracts student-athletes,

recruits and donors. At the university’s renovated Daryl K Royal-Texas Memorial football stadium, fans can view electronic visuals on giant screens and respond to promotions from their seats by text messaging from their smart phones.

“You have to give students and fans the ultimate interactive experience,” says Christine Plonsky, UT’s senior associate athletics director for men’s and women’s athletics. “We’re competing head to head with pro teams in our state; we have to provide good concessions, sound systems, video screen replays, and even state-of-the-art first aid stations.”

To establish a new benchmark for stadium excellence, after the Big 12 Conference announced formation in 1994, UT hired Heery to craft a master plan that would allow it to increase stadium capacity from 80,000 seats to over 100,000, enhance player amenities to help with student-athlete recruitment and retention, expand fan amenities, and add high-end suites and club seats to generate revenues.

According to Mike Holleman, Heery’s director of sports facility design, UT’s stadium design reflects a growing trend in college sports facilities to compete for pro sports fans.

“Unlike the functional concourses of the past, college sports facilities are no longer like Erector Sets,” says Holleman. “They’re now encased in glass, brick, and stone, with enhanced interiors and branding, and wired with technology.”

UT’s high-end facilities, including the stadium, basketball arena, baseball, softball and track/soccer facility, and field houses, serve as prime highlights for student-athlete recruitment tours.

“Game-day spirit is a big part of the campus tour,” testifies Holleman. “It’s the ‘wow’ factor.”

“We want the impression from our facilities to be a combination of class and swagger, a feel-good sense of traditional pride and humor, and a can-do attitude about achievement,” says UT’s Plonsky. “The message is: Texas makes you better as a student-athlete because there’s an expectation for excellence.”

“...an institution’s most important marketing tool is student life amenities.”

Sustainability’s impact on brand

Increasingly, university facilities are shaping and even driving academic brand through sustainability. In the last eight to 10 years, Heery’s Tom Woodward has seen the commitment to sustainable design grow from being merely desirable to becoming essential.

“We’ve seen campuses that have gotten their feet wet by incorporating basic sustainable features now pursuing LEED Silver and Gold certifications,” says Woodward. “Institutions that have gotten a few sustainable facilities under their belt realize the return.”

Aside from significant energy and cost savings, the return for sustainable facilities is a heightened competitive edge with recruits. Increasingly, prospective students and their families are demanding to know up front how the college is practicing sustainable values.

“Recruits care about sustainability; they look for evidence of sustainable practices on college websites,” confirms CSU’s Emerick. “They’re looking for an institution that demonstrates through actions, not just through words, that it is committed to green values.”

Southern Polytechnic President Rossbacher agrees. “One of the first things I’m asked at our recruiting open-house events is: ‘I’ve heard this campus is sustainable, talk about that,’” says Rossbacher. “When I speak about how we build flexibly, efficiently use space, manage thermal load through the building, conserve light and energy and commit to LEED certifications, it’s a way to say something about what our values are as an institution.”

Many leaders have come to see sustainable facilities as inseparable from academic brand.

“Efficient, beautiful, well-kept facilities are part of every endeavor in athletics and part of what is good about our state and our institution,” says UT’s Plonsky. “Students know just by walking into such a facility what will be expected of them: they’ll work hard, train hard, and act responsibly, both on campus and out in the world.”



The Power of New



Leading edge facilities with up-to-date technology and design are particularly crucial for teaching hospitals. Not only must they serve patients with life-saving care but also support the best training for new generations of physicians.

According to John Staley, senior associate director of University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics (UIHC), a new medical facility is a powerful recruitment tool, leading both to improved patient care and resident training by attracting the best and brightest staff.

“The ability to offer a recruit at the department head level, or a new nursing graduate, an outstanding space for serving patients, modern labs, leading edge equipment, and an exceptional OR can be the deciding factor as to whether they will join our institution,” says Staley.

Thanks to a capital replacement program that began in the 1970s and was completed in 2005, UIHC has realized substantial benefits in attracting staff and trainees, according to Staley. The project replaced aging facilities with five new additions and made it possible to provide the most advanced services in many specialties, including comprehensive cancer care and life-saving radiation therapy. Now, the UIHC has embarked on a new Strategic Facilities Master Plan, which first involves development of a new Children’s Hospital. When completed in 2015, children’s services, which are now spread across all major facilities, will be consolidated

“A new medical facility is a powerful recruitment tool.”



under one roof. The new building will feature expanded neonatal and pediatric ICU’s as well as expanded acute care facilities, a new eight-room operating suite, expanded pediatric specialty clinics, dentistry and dialysis facilities, pediatric imaging, cardiac catheterization and a pediatric translational and outcomes research center.

“All these facilities will provide significant enhancements to capabilities of caring for severely ill and injured patients and provide an ideal setting for training pediatric and other residents caring for children,” says Staley.

Following the completion of the Children’s Hospital, the UIHC will embark on developing a new Critical Care Tower.

“These projects have and are generating a tremendous amount of excitement,” says Staley. “I can’t think of anywhere it hasn’t enhanced our ability to recruit.”

Q&A: North Carolina Higher Education Facilities Professionals

Heery reached out to three higher education officials in North Carolina for an informal Question & Answer session on the evolving facilities needs of higher education in the Tarheel State. Our respondents included Kevin J. MacNaughton, Associate Vice Chancellor for Facilities at North Carolina State University; Wendell Goodwin, P.E., Facility Engineering Officer at Wake Technical Community College; and William Barlowe, Director of Design & Construction at North Carolina A&T State University.

Heery: *If there were one thing you could eliminate from the entire facilities design and construction process, what would it be?*

KM: Much has been done over the past decade in the NC public sector to enhance the process with the introduction of alternate construction delivery methods and the conjoining of reviewing agencies. There does seem to be merit in introducing design-build for projects that are generic in nature such as parking decks.

WB: I would be interested in using technology to continuously evaluate pros and cons with regard to new materials, delivery methods, etc., to determine what may be best for us.

Heery: *Describe a project that you have either recently completed or are in the process of developing that best reflects the direction of the university and explain why.*

KM: Our new library under construction will feature a far more collaborative environment dedicated to students working together. Books will be stored in a dense storage with robotic retrieval. This frees up considerable program space for people.

WG: The recently completed Building D at the Northern Wake Campus achieved LEED Gold, which is indicative of

Wake Tech’s desire to be a leader in sustainability. Building D included 26 classrooms to help our goal of getting as many students enrolled as possible to meet our recent growth.

WB: We recently completed our new General Academic Building. Many of our colleges, schools and departments participated in the programming effort. The facility will be used by all colleges, schools and departments and no single unit will be the sole user/owner. I see this joint collaboration as the new way of doing business.

Heery: *What is your biggest facility/infrastructure concern going forward?*

KM: Insufficient funding dedicated to maintaining huge existing capital investments and the sudden aging out of a large portion of the experienced work force capable of maintaining these facilities.

WG: Parking is always a big challenge as we grow.

WB: Funding repair and renovation/deferred maintenance projects. We would like to receive an annual allocation of repair and renovation dollars to fund large renovation/repair and deferred maintenance projects to ensure our investments are maintained.

Heery: *What role does recruiting faculty or students to your campus play in determining project priorities?*

KM: We do more landscape improvement projects these days because we recognize that the first impression of outward appearance is an early determinate for prospective faculty and students in particular.

WG: Our top priorities are always centered around building classroom facilities.

WB: Recruitment plays a major role. We often hear how great a college is or is not, and that perception is solely based on curb appeal and not academic strength.

University of Utah football team facility: Planning an efficient home away from home

College football coaches, especially during the season, do not like dithering. They prefer efficiency. They want their players on time and tuned in once they're inside the program's football facility.

Having programmed, designed, or built one football team facility after another, Heery understands the college football coach's demand for prompt players. It's all about adjacencies, flow and getting the student-athletes to meetings and practice on time. In handling the programming for the University of Utah's new \$30 million football facility, which will open in 2013, Heery laid out the building, determining square footage of office space, FF&E needs, branding, specialized equipment and, more importantly, the location of meeting rooms and coaches offices to get players from here to there.

"Without us even having to say the word 'flow' they used the word flow," says Jeff Rudy, the director of football operations for Utah. "They understood the path the student-athlete would follow when they come into the building. When our time is short, we need that flow."

It is a significant project because the Utes are stepping onto the big stage of the Bowl Championship Series and joining what used to be known as the Pac-10 Conference (now the Pac-12 with the addition of Utah and Colorado).

Utah's new facility will have to be on par with programs at the University of Oregon, the 2010 national runner-up, and Arizona, Stanford, Southern Cal, and other major programs in the Pac-12.

"We're a competitive program, and Heery has worked with some of our competitors, and they have worked with SEC teams, and that experience alone made it real easy for me to talk to them about what I wanted," Rudy says. "They took our thoughts and ideas and put it into the programming."

Mike Holleman, Heery's director of sports facility design, explains that all the different users in the building were interviewed to sync up needs with space and flow. Room diagrams were developed from the interviews, and those diagrams were arranged into site options.

"It's about efficiency of operation," Holleman states. "The equipment room is adjacent to the locker room so the players can pick up their laundry and get repairs done without having to go down the hall. The same is true for the training and rehab

area. The plunge pools are right there near the practice fields, so they can dip into those pools and get their body temperature back to normal, and go right into the locker room."

Meeting rooms were put directly above the football locker room so players could hop up the stairs. The coaches' offices were put next to the meeting rooms. It helped that head coach Kyle Whittingham took a keen interest in the project, which is not typical of every major college coach.

"They bring great expertise to it. They understand the language that we're talking and they understand what our needs are," says Kyle Brennan, Utah's assistant athletic director for compliance. "They have been good at presenting us with things we have not thought about. Todd Ballew [Heery's operations analyst] is a football guy and he used to work in an equipment room so, for example, he understands the needs of equipment guys and what they need day in and day out."

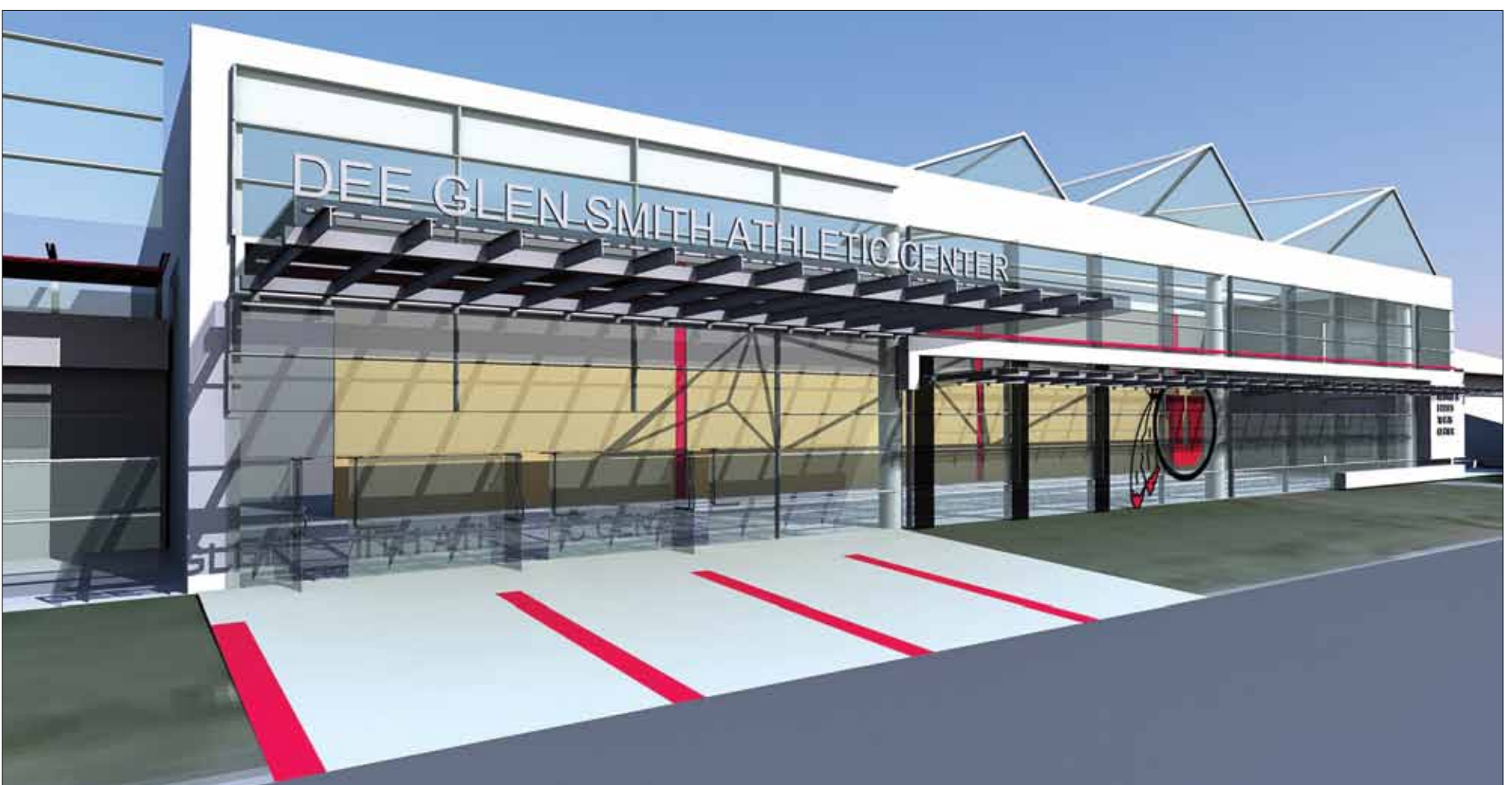
Jacob Vagts and Erica Guevara rounded out the Heery programming team, translating piles of interview notes and "department wish lists" into data sheets and diagrams used for the design/build selection process. The arrangement of spaces goes beyond player development flow efficiency. It also addresses player recruiting. It provides a path for high school recruits to see the traditions, current accomplishments and spirit of Utes football.

"They are good at listening. They didn't come in and try and put their vision on us," says Brennan.

Utah wanted the facility to be LEED Silver certified and it wanted a space with enough polish to impress boosters. There will be balcony space on the back of the building to afford views of the mountains that ring the campus.

What was also important to Utah was making the facility comfortable for its players. Football, after all, has become an 11-month job what with offseason conditioning starting in January, spring ball in March and April, summer workouts, and then the start of camp and the season.

"We wanted it designed so it is a home away from home, so there are two aspects to the project," Brennan points out. "They have to have a place where they want to be and spend their time and get class work done, or meet with a nutritionist. They also have a lot of time to spend there for rehab or to lift weights, and those items need to flow together in the right way to make it efficient to use, so time is not wasted."



Creating a more efficient campus



Identifying the top five issues that reduce efficiency and increase costs

Staff and students complain of poor comfort issues throughout the year.

Everyone grumbles about stuffy classrooms, campus temperature, noise and lighting levels. And should your energy costs really be that high?

Sound familiar? You're not alone.

As operational budgets shrink and higher education facilities tighten their belts, facilities managers are seeking ways to decrease campus energy use and increase cost efficiency. In an effort to pinpoint energy-saving solutions, many higher education facilities turn to retro-commissioning to help identify potential environmental performance issues and develop operational and maintenance improvements.

Retro-commissioning refers to providing commissioning services to a building that is already in use. It might be considered for a relatively new building to confirm that systems continue to function as originally designed. For older buildings and systems, retro-commissioning may be used to troubleshoot problems, improve energy efficiency, or determine if changes need to be made to the system or controls strategy.

From Florida to Washington, Heery's retro-commissioning agents continue to see the same major campus facilities issues. So what's causing decreased efficiency and increased costs on higher education campuses?

Issue #1: Poor design, installation, or sequence programming

If a system or sequence is poorly designed, you're in trouble from the start.

These problems run the gamut from fans or pumps running backward, air vents leaking heated or chilled air, or equipment that doesn't function properly together. According to Heery commissioning agent Jim Warner, "If any project phase lacks detailed design, professional installation, proper programming or thorough testing, it can decrease the building's system performance."

Commissioning agent Martin Newhard agrees that even one small faultily designed element can wreak havoc on the entire system. "After hours of trying to determine the cause of low-exhaust air flow in a cadaver lab—pretty important considering the chemical smells—we finally found one damper was actually mismarked: it was closed when it was reading open. Once that discovery was made, we were able to get the system to perform."

Issue #2: Insufficient test and balance work

Test, adjust and balance (TAB) testing is a critical step in HVAC system installation, yet is often not verified or completely forgotten. TAB testing firms balance the system and verify that the air and water flows that were specified during design are present during normal system operation. It is also performed to confirm an HVAC system is providing occupant

comfort and the lowest energy cost possible in accordance to the design schedules or Code minimum.

"With incorrect TAB work, we see low or high water flow through coils, low or high air flow across coils, or duct caps not removed after duct pressure testing, all issues that lead to a less efficient or non-working HVAC system," says Heery commissioning agent Patrick Stauber.

Issue #3: Improperly trained staff

Building mechanical systems can be complex beasts – and the maintenance staff needs to know how to keep the beast in line.

"In our experience, maintenance personnel are hard-working professionals," says Warner. "But if they are not properly trained on the systems they must maintain, it decreases the chance of the system's achieving optimal performance. And the risks increase if they are using new or unique technology." Since maintenance operators already have a full day job, trying to get them to tune and trend their systems to actual environment demands can be very hit or miss depending on the building's end-users' tolerance and the facilities staff's confidence and available time.

Improper training can lead to the next problem:

Issue #4: User-implemented equipment problems

Sometimes a well-intended fix to satisfy one complaint can cause greater problems, particularly if the maintenance staff attempts to correct a problem without fully understanding the root cause. "We often discover non-operating equipment broken or in the manual override position," says Newhard. "This is a significant factor in decreased building performance."

Another problem: maintenance personnel overriding the systems or modifying setpoints and then forgetting what they have done and why they did it. This can lessen the automation of a system and waste energy, particularly if, for example, an outside air damper is left 100 percent open in the spring and forgotten about until the next winter.

Issue #5: Underfunded maintenance budgets

In a time when higher education institutions are slashing budgets, it's easy to look at testing, training and routine maintenance as expendable. But in the long run, without adequate investment, capital plant owners may be shooting themselves in the foot.

According to Warner, "Equipment, new or old, that is not properly and routinely maintained tends to perform less than optimally, potentially causing costly repairs earlier than otherwise expected."

While budgets are tight, strategic investment in proper design, testing, training, and routine maintenance will lead to a more efficient system and lower costs over time. If staff lacks the time or expertise to review systems operation, owners can buy a continuous commissioning service from a dedicated specialist for a relatively small cost. Like an annual physical, consistent monitoring can reveal signs that might lead to catastrophic failure if left unattended.



Millersville State University: Client advocacy helps university deal with the unexpected

It was the last thing Heery construction manager Matt Eskridge expected to see. While working on the foundation for a new performing arts center at Millersville State University last summer, the contractor unleashed a torrent of water that brought the project to an abrupt halt.

“We were looking at eight to 10 gallons of water coming out of the ground per minute,” he said. “It was like a geyser in some places. That was a real surprise.”

Controlling the unexpected inundation and its ripple effects took three months.

“The key was to keep things moving,” said Eskridge. “We had to re-sequence the project and find other work for our contractors to do on-site. It took a lot of effort from everyone to keep it on track.”

Heery’s handling of the problem earned kudos from Millersville’s contracting officer Ruth Sheetz.

“Heery has worked diligently to manage these obstacles,” Sheetz said. “Our on-site Heery team has valuable construction experience and good communication skills. All our interaction with Heery has been positive.”

Now, a year later, the focus is back on transforming a 1940s auditorium into a contemporary performing arts center with new classrooms, offices, practice rooms and performance spaces.

“The goal is to make it as much of a showcase for the community as it is for the college.”

“The goal is to make it as much of a showcase for the community as it is for the college,” says Heery’s Northeast area manager Bob Monser. “One of the greatest challenges was transforming a high school-like auditorium, with relatively low ceiling heights, into a state-of-the-art theater with catwalks and spot lights above, while maintaining good visibility for the audience.”

Such a challenge is not new to Heery. The firm was selected for the Millersville, Pa., project after successfully completing a similar project at West Chester University, near Philadelphia.

“We interviewed several firms on the PASSHE (Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education) CM/PM open-end [contract],” said Sheetz. “We were impressed with Heery’s approach to CM Owner Agent, and that they had also recently completed a performing arts project for West Chester.”

With the water issues under control, the arts center has moved forward quickly. The facade is going on, windows are being installed and drywall is going up. The finished facility is expected to open in mid to late summer 2012.

“Things have moved along as expected for such an old building,” said Eskridge. “The renovation hasn’t been nearly as challenging as getting the new addition in place. Once the recital hall, concert hall, and high-tech recording studio are completed, this facility will be a premier venue for student and community performances.”

Given Millersville’s satisfaction with the project, it also hired the firm to tackle a major renovation of the library, a 10-story building whose air conditioning system gave out this summer.

“The architect is finishing up the design to completely gut the building, put on additions and re-do the mechanical systems,” said Eskridge. “There’s also been a lot of intense preparation, including finding a place to store more than 20,000 boxes of books.”

The overhaul of the library is expected to last at least 16 months, and Sheetz expects the project to go smoothly.

“We feel confident we have an advocate on the project site working for on our behalf,” she said.



Spillman Farmer Architects

Fayetteville State University breaks ground on new Science and Technology Building

Heery Design joined the Fayetteville State University Chancellor and Trustees in celebrating the groundbreaking for its new Science and Technology Building. The new \$18 million facility will be the university’s first LEED certified building and is targeted to achieve LEED Silver. The 62,000 SF building, designed in partnership with Anshen + Allen, is articulated in three basic parts: a laboratory/classroom wing, an office wing, and the discovery forum—a cone-shaped form that will contain gathering space shared by all building occupants for instruction and collaboration, as well as provide a public realm for the building, including a café space on the ground level. Accompanying the “cone” is a transparent “bridge” that was inspired by traditional porches. The cone and bridge together connect and anchor the main quadrangle to the science quadrangle and symbolize the university’s commitment to STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) learning principles. The new building will contain teaching laboratories, classrooms, faculty offices and seminar rooms in support of the institution’s scientific instructional goals. It will also house students and faculty of the math and computer science, chemistry, physics and forensics departments.



Ventura County Community College District: former Seabees put battle-tested skills to good use to deliver new facilities



There's an element of program and construction management that's akin to doing battle under fire – fighting against cost increases, weather delays, constructability and programming issues, occupied construction challenges, timely material delivery, unforeseen infrastructure or building concerns, and more.

For Gary Kuppenbender and Terrance Greenlaw, part of the project management team responsible for the \$350 million plus Ventura County Community College District capital improvement program in Ventura County, Calif., the duty is far easier than they've pulled in the past. Both Heery project managers have previously been part of the fighting Seabees, the Navy's construction battalion, part of which is headquartered in Ventura County. The Seabees are recognized for building bases, bulldozing and paving thousands of miles of roadway and airstrips, and accomplishing countless other construction projects since being initiated during World War II.

Both achieved the coveted and respected rank of Chief. Both have been deployed across the globe, managing a wealth of construction projects ranging from orphanages to advanced camps for incoming marine forces. Both know what it's like to do their jobs with M16 or 9mm rifles strapped on their backs. Despite retiring from the military, they're currently both under the gun to complete multiple new construction and renovation projects – Kuppenbender at Ventura Community College and Greenlaw at Oxnard.

How has the experience shaped their professional lives? "I remember being in Saudi Arabia during Operation Desert Storm when a couple of SCUDS flew in our direction," Kuppenbender recalls. "While we were clearly worried, there's no room in the military for getting anxious or

excited. You have to remain calm and rational to resolve whatever challenge you may be confronted with."

Greenlaw also has his own memories of being under fire in far off Somalia. "It's daunting to know the lives of those under your command are at stake," Greenlaw says. "There's no room to be anything less than a top notch professional."

During an Armed Forces Radio interview, Kuppenbender was asked why he did what he did. "I told them I get excited by the process of looking at blueprints and seeing in my mind the path towards construction and the potential problems associated with it. Then, when it all comes together, there's a great sense of accomplishment."

Neither Kuppenbender nor Greenlaw minds the long hours that seem to be part and parcel of a large college

The Energy Center can also operate on a variety of liquid and gas fuel sources, including biofuels.

construction project. "There was no such thing as a 9 to 5 day in the Seabees," Kuppenbender says. "You worked until the job got done, which is no different than what Terrance and I are doing now. Trust me, we're not looking for a pat on the back – we just want to get the job done."

EXTRA ALUMNUS PRIDE

Beyond the pride of a job done well, Kuppenbender has been excited to see his alma mater blossom before his eyes into a contemporary collegiate campus that satisfies current educational standards. "I began taking construction technology classes at Ventura when I was stationed here with the Seabees," Kuppenbender notes. "After earning my own degree, I started teaching advanced construction to the Seabees at Port Hueneme, and worked with Ventura College to help students take additional courses there. My old professor has even asked me to conduct a brief introduction for the new students in the program. It's a rewarding experience on so many levels."



Heery helps shape design student futures

Lorraine Bragg and Ronok Nichols believe today's design students are tomorrow's industry leaders. Bragg, a Heery-Miami based interior designer, and Nichols, a Heery-Orlando architect also believe it's incumbent upon professionals like themselves to share their expertise, helping these future designers and architects bridge the gap between classroom theory and real-life applications to make the most of their potential.



Bragg serves on the interior design advisory boards to Florida International University and Miami Dade College, and is involved with the Miami College of Art and Design. "The industry has seen so many changes over the years," Bragg says. "The process of what students need to learn in design is different. Codes impact much more now than ever before – fire codes, access and egress codes. Integrating sustainability into curriculum is critical because in a growing number of regions, such as Florida's Dade County, you can't touch a county project without achieving a minimum of LEED Silver." While pie in the sky creativity has its place, it's important to help students focus on real design issues.

As an advisory board member, Bragg's goal is to help students understand the business aspect of interior design.

"We offer the students new perspectives, encouraging them to think about how their ideas can be layered with deeper conceptual meaning and reinforced by practical information."

"Teaching students how to run a business, how to interact with clients are important aspects of interior design," she says. "Today's designer is much more involved from a project's inception, which requires them to master an additional set of skills."

Bragg, who is President-Elect for the South Florida Chapter of the International Interior Design Association, has worked hard over the years to encourage student involvement with the organization. "We encourage student participation in all our events. We also invite them to compete as equals in our awards programs. One of our goals is to create more mentoring programs as well as internship programs to help these students move forward successfully."

Nichols knows firsthand the positive value of internships. After obtaining her master's degree in architecture, she landed an internship and ultimately a full-time job with HLM Design (now Heery). After graduating, she was also offered a role as visiting professor at the University of Florida (UF) to teach Design III Studio.

"Another staff member and I used to drive to UF every other day to teach," Nichols remembers. "One of the things I enjoyed most was helping students bridge the theoretical and practical sides of architecture."

Currently, Nichols serves as a guest design critic for undergraduate design studios at Valencia Community College. "We offer the students new perspectives, encouraging them to think about how their ideas can be layered with deeper conceptual meaning and reinforced by practical information, helping them create projects that are well-informed," Nichols says.

These aspiring architects often tour Heery-Orlando's office, allowing them to get a sense of a professional architectural environment and opening possibilities to explore internships as Nichols did.

While both Bragg and Nichols are proud of their efforts, they believe working with students affords educational opportunities for them as well. "Student designs are very conceptual in nature," Nichols says. "Their ideas are so fresh and inspiring. Given the extensive dialogues we have with each other, I feel safe saying we learn as much as we teach."



Georgia Tech basketball practice facility secures LEED Gold

The Heery-designed basketball practice facility at Georgia Tech, known as the Zelnak Center, has attained LEED Gold certification, exceeding the commitment Heery made to achieve a minimum of LEED Silver. The \$8 million, 20,000 SF facility includes one and a half courts, allowing a full-size court and three cross courts with eight baskets, a 24-seat theater for video instruction, a video editing room, a 2,500 SF weight room and team exhibit space. The team was able to make the jump to LEED Gold from LEED Silver without increasing the project's cost, a particular challenge given the nature of the space. The large volume gym required a strategic approach to achieve Georgia Tech's sustainability and budgetary goals.

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Contributing Writers: Sue Wasserman, Margie Combs, Christina Steinburg, Helen Cauley
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