

News Release

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Vacated Historic College Campus Gets Second Life as Headquarters for Georgia State Agency

*Rehabilitation project preserves and enhances campus' historic character
while providing agency with functional, practical buildings for a new use*

FORSYTH, Ga., June 15, 2011 – A dormant 40-acre college campus – which lay vacant for more than 10 years – has been given a new life as the headquarters and training academy for the [Georgia Department of Corrections](#) (GDC).

The campus, located 65 miles south of Atlanta and now called the State Offices South at Tift College, opened last fall after four years of research, planning, infrastructure upgrades and the full rehabilitation of 13 structures. The massive renovation and adaptive reuse project, which encompassed 225,000 square feet, was led by architecture firm [Lord, Aeck & Sargent](#) in a collaboration of its Education and Historic Preservation design studios.

Founded in 1849 as the Forsyth Female Collegiate Institute, Tift College, as it was later known, was a private liberal arts women's college. In 1986 the college merged with Mercer University, and its 40-acre campus, a portion of which is listed on the National Register of Historic places, was left vacant. When the property was acquired by the state of Georgia in

– more –

2000, the campus contained 17 buildings, a majority of which were 50 years or older and considered to be historically significant.

Two-fold overall design strategy

“Our overriding design strategy was to preserve and enhance the historic character of the campus – especially its historic [‘Front Circle’](#) – while providing the GDC with functional, practical buildings for a new use,” said Joe Greco, president of Lord, Aeck & Sargent and project principal. “And it’s significant,” he added, “that in giving the campus a new life, we didn’t demolish any structures, and we were able to designate a programmatic counterpart for all the traditional college campus functions, from administrative to student life.”

The multiphase project, which began with research to understand the campus history, was followed by a master plan and upgrades to the campus infrastructure. These included reorienting the site with a new front entry closer to Interstate 75, building a new road to connect the new and original campus entries, and adjusting the campus boundaries in order to situate a parking area on an outparcel obtained by the State. Before construction began, a hazardous materials survey was conducted, revealing lead paint, which was removed and/or encapsulated, as well as mold and asbestos, which were fully abated. Finally, a new central energy plant was constructed serving the new energy-efficient mechanical systems installed in all of the substantial buildings.

Complexity of project presents challenges, different treatment approaches

In carrying out its design strategy, the Lord, Aeck & Sargent team faced a number of challenges.

“The Tift buildings are small relative to today’s modern college campus facilities, so it was a challenge to determine how we could make them effective for the GDC’s needs and also

function cost-effectively,” said Christine Ray, who served as Lord, Aeck & Sargent’s project manager. “The complexity of rehabilitating structures from so many different eras and also addressing compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act while creating a cohesive campus and preserving character-defining elements was also a challenge.”

Ray noted that each rehabilitated building merited its own treatment approach.

Ponder Hall, the oldest building on campus, dated from 1883 and required a respectful approach. Over the years the building had undergone a number of unsympathetic renovations as well as expansions on either side of the main structure. The second story, once a chapel and auditorium, had been subdivided into small classrooms. Lord, Aeck & Sargent’s design brought the second floor back to its original appearance, removing non-historic interior walls and restoring original plaster walls and trim. The GDC now uses it as open office space. In addition, the asphalt shingle roof was replaced by a standing seam metal roof more in keeping with Ponder’s original metal roof, and 1980s era aluminum windows were replaced with insulated windows closer in appearance to the historic windows.

Upshaw Hall, constructed in 1904 as a dormitory, is the second oldest structure on campus. The building had been gutted and renovated in 1961, so little historic fabric remained in the interior. The design team’s approach here was to remove the interior partitions and give the interior loft-like office aesthetics with exposed ductwork. The building’s exterior, however, was brought closer to its historic appearance, with restoration of the original windows and new porch railings built to replicate the originals.

At the other end of the spectrum, four buildings – an auditorium and three dormitories – required the least amount of intervention because the GDC is still using them as an auditorium and as overnight accommodation space for its correctional officer trainees.

Contributions of multiple entities holds down costs

Forty-six million dollars of the project cost was funded by the Georgia State Legislature. However, Greco noted that total costs were held down as the result of the contributions of several entities, which if counted would likely bring the true commercial value to more than \$60 million. As a cost saving measure, GDC's inmate work force independently renovated more than 50 percent of the site's gross square feet. Construction manager [Gilbane Building Co.](#), performed the remainder of the work. Nearly all of the furniture used on the campus was fabricated and installed by [Georgia Correctional Industries](#). In addition, the City of Forsyth donated water and electrical infrastructure improvements to attract the project, which has eliminated a community eyesore and is expected to be an economic boon to the middle Georgia town.

One reason for the boon is that the GDC's new headquarters has moved from downtown Atlanta, and some 400 central office staff positions are being relocated.

"Moving our headquarters to Forsyth will position the Department to better protect the citizens of Georgia by effectively managing offenders," said Commissioner Brian Owens. "Because the majority of facilities are located south of the Metro Atlanta area, the Department will also gain efficiencies through consolidation and reduced travel time and costs."

The GDC's law enforcement academy, known as the Georgia Corrections Academy, provides training for the state's probation and correctional officers, as well as staff development training for all non-security staff, including counselors, food service and administrative staff. The Academy's addition to the campus has freed up critical space about two miles away at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center, where, as part of the project, Lord, Aeck & Sargent designed a new facility that is servicing fleet vehicles for the GDC and other state agencies.

The Project Team

The State Offices South at Tift College project team includes:

- Georgia State Financing & Investment Commission (Atlanta) – owner
- Georgia State Department of Corrections (Forsyth) – using agency
- Lord, Aeck & Sargent (Atlanta office) – architect
- Gilbane Building Co. (Atlanta office) – construction manager
- Horizon Engineering (Marietta, Ga.) – civil engineer
- Davis Pullin Associates (East Point, Ga.) – electrical engineer
- NBP Engineers (Macon, Ga. office) – mechanical and plumbing engineers, fire protection and telecommunications (for the rehabilitated buildings at the State Offices South at Tift College)
- AHA Consulting Engineers (Alpharetta, Ga. office) – mechanical, electrical, plumbing, fire protection and telecommunications (for the Fleet Facility)
- Uzun & Case (Atlanta) – structural engineer
- The Jaeger Company (Gainesville, Ga.) and T.J. Schell (Marietta, Ga.) – landscape architects
- Huie Design Inc. (Atlanta, Ga.) – Environmental Graphics
- CEI (Atlanta) – audio-visual
- Phillips Langley (Suwanee, Ga.) – hardware consultant
- The Ryman Group (Roswell, Ga.) – security consultant

About Lord, Aeck & Sargent

Lord, Aeck & Sargent is an award-winning architectural firm serving clients in scientific, academic, historic preservation, arts and cultural, and multi-family housing and mixed-use markets. The firm's core values are responsive design, technological expertise and exceptional service. Lord, Aeck & Sargent has offices in Ann Arbor, Michigan; Atlanta, Georgia; and Chapel Hill, North Carolina. For more information, visit the firm at www.lordaecksargent.com.

About the Georgia Department of Corrections

The Department of Corrections is the fifth largest prison system in the United States and is responsible for supervising nearly 60,000 state prisoners and over 150,000 probationers. It is the largest law enforcement agency in the state of Georgia with approximately 13,000 employees.

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NOTE: Following is a brief overview of the rehabilitated structures at the State Offices South at Tift College:

Ponder Hall (originally known as Wiggs Hall)

- Construction: 1883
- Original use: office/classroom/dormitory/auditorium
- Current use: office
- Square footage: 24,344
- Levels: two (main building); three (additions, one on either side of the main building)

Upshaw Hall

- Construction: 1904
- Original use: dormitory
- Current use: office
- Square footage: 42,000
- Levels: four, plus partial basement

Water Tower

- Construction: circa 1910
- Original use: water tower
- Current use: radio communications
- Square footage: N/A (40,000 gal. estimated capacity)
- Levels: N/A (137 feet tall)

Wilkes Hall (originally known as the Fine Arts Building)

- Construction: 1930
- Original use: gymnasium
- Current use: office
- Square footage: 5,495
- Levels: two

Roberts Memorial Auditorium

- Construction: 1951
- Original use: auditorium
- Current use: auditorium
- Square footage: 12,034
- Levels: two, plus balcony

Monroe Hall

- Construction: 1957
- Original use: dormitory
- Current use: dormitory
- Square footage: 15,336
- Levels: two, plus partial basement

Hubbard Hall

- Construction: 1959
- Original use: dormitory
- Current use: dormitory
- Square footage: 13,826
- Levels: two, plus partial basement

Vinzant Hall

- Construction: 1960
- Original use: gymnasium/natatorium
- Current use: instructional/tactical training/office
- Square footage: 22,448
- Levels: one, plus partial mechanical basement under former natatorium

Sewell Hall

- Construction: 1961
- Original use: dormitory
- Current use: dormitory
- Square footage: 13,826
- Levels: two, plus partial basement

Hardin Library

- Construction: 1964
- Original use: library
- Current use: library/learning resource center/office/instructional
- Square footage: 12,034
- Levels: two, plus partial mezzanine

Rutland Student Center

- Construction: 1966
- Original use: cafeteria/student center
- Current use: cafeteria/office
- Square footage: 14,479
- Levels: two, with partial mechanical basement

Lies Hall

- Construction: 1968
- Original use: dormitory
- Current use: office
- Square footage: 19,158
- Levels: two

Gibson Hall (originally known as the Administration Building)

- Construction: 1975
- Original use: administration
- Current use: office
- Square footage: 38,434
- Levels: three

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