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Arizona State University's Former Nursing Building Undergoes Green Renovation

New Global Institute of Sustainability building houses School of Sustainability, first of its kind in the United States

TEMPE, Ariz., Jan. 5, 2009 – It is fitting that the Arizona State University (ASU) Global Institute of Sustainability and newly formed School of Sustainability – the first in the United States to offer transdisciplinary degree programs that explore and advance practical solutions to environmental, economic and social challenges – should be housed in a sustainably designed facility. However, that was easier envisioned than achieved, considering that these two entities are located in a once-dreary building designed in 1965.

Although ASU's original budget of $3 million for the renovation of its former Nursing Building allowed primarily for asbestos abatement; upgrading the fire and life safety, HVAC and lighting systems; and making the elevators, stairways and restrooms ADA compliant, university officials envisioned more. So when an additional $3 million became available from ASU's capital budget, architects from the team of Lord, Aeck & Sargent and Gould Evans Associates collaborated to create a building that would celebrate responsible design – both inside and out – as visible proof of the Institute's mission (see page 5). The result is the transformation of a

dark, vintage 1960s-era structure with cavernous hallways into a bright, open, eco-friendly facility that is targeting silver-level LEED certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. The building is anticipated to save 18.7 percent on energy use and 50.3 percent on water use compared with the original building's baseline usage.

"ASU officials had a vision for salvaging the old Nursing Building, which is located at a prominent intersection on Cady Mall, the main north-south walkway on the Tempe campus. Their vision set the tone for the design team's decisions," said Elba St. Romain, a Lord, Aeck & Sargent architect who served as project manager for the renovation. "Our team was tasked with finding the right balance of upgrades that would give the building a visible educational component, make it energy- and water-efficient and give ASU the most bang for its buck."

To the building's many passers-by, perhaps the most visible educational component – and one that gives the Institute the physical presence desired by the University – is the addition of a renewable energy source: six wind turbines mounted on the roof's eastern edge and powered by thermal updrafts. Each turbine works 24 hours daily and, when the wind blows, provides 1,000 watts of power to the Arizona Public Service grid.

Still to be added to the roof next year is a 24-kilowatt photovoltaic solar array. This installation is happening as part of ASU's plan to install solar cells on the rooftops of campus buildings, eventually providing 7.4 megawatts of power to the University's Tempe campus, the largest such array in the United States.

Among the Institute's energy conservation strategies are: a new energy-efficient, sensor-controlled lighting system as well as increased use of natural light; installation of superior exterior brick wall and roofing insulation; removal of existing louvers and replacement of the single glazed windows on the building's east side; installation of sunscreens along the east, west and south windows to reduce unwanted solar gain and control glare; and cleaning and modifying the mechanical systems.

Water-saving strategies also were a focus for the design team, which specified waterless urinals, low-flow toilets, timer-based faucets and automatically monitored landscaping irrigation. Pervious paving surrounding the site controls storm water runoff.

The building also makes use of a wide variety of high recycled content products such as countertops made from recycled milk jugs inlaid with shavings from recycled cans and GreenGuard® Indoor Air Quality Certified furniture; as well as low VOC-emitting paints, carpet, flooring, gypsum sheathing and interior signage.

A light-filled design

According to Jonathan Fink, who serves ASU in a dual role as director of the Global Institute of Sustainability and the university sustainability officer, the renovation design team's biggest challenge was "to change the look and feel of the space from a depressing 'chicken coop' or 'hospital ward' to a bright and airy collaborative environment that would foster interactions."

To transform the building from dreary to bright, the Lord, Aeck & Sargent / Gould Evans team chose to increase use of natural light. While the existing faculty offices around the perimeter of the top two floors were left in place, offices in the center were removed to provide an open floor plan. Windowed conference rooms were added on the east side of the top two floors, allowing light to permeate the interior space.

On the west façade of the building's upper two floors, balconies for outdoor interaction were created by removing a section of exterior brick. In place of the brick, sturdy metal trellises were installed to allow vines to climb and provide cooling shade, while still allowing good site views and filtered natural light.

Perhaps most innovative in terms of adding light and promoting interaction was the removal of brick on the northeast and southeast corners of the top two floors so what were previously dark corner offices are now informal, windowed meeting areas.

“The best aspects of the building are the profusion of light and the sitting areas in the east corners of the top floors. They foster spontaneous conversations among students, faculty and staff,” Fink said.

“In spite of our modifications, we were able to retain much of the building’s exterior design so that it still looks very much like the vintage '60s-era building that it is,” said John Dimmel, a Gould Evans architect who served as lead project designer on the renovation. “The building had a lot going for it, and it was interesting to work with it and make it into something new.”

What’s housed in the building

The 48,806-square-foot Institute has five floors – four above ground. It houses administrative and private faculty and graduate student offices, conference rooms, open areas, classrooms, and in the basement, six classrooms for general university use.

The first floor houses the School of Sustainability’s admissions office, and the second floor includes both a student breakroom and two casual “synthesis lab/lounges” for research projects. In addition, there are two School of Sustainability classrooms and a large multipurpose room with seating for about 50. In addition to the fourth floor conference room and third and fourth floor corner meeting rooms and balconies, the top two floors include private offices, computer labs and lots of open spaces for student/faculty meetings.

The Project Team

The project team for Global Institute of Sustainability building comprised:

- Arizona State University (Tempe) – owner
  - Mohammad Madjidi, ASU project manager
  - Brenda Shears, Global Institute of Sustainability/ASU Liaison
- Lord, Aeck & Sargent, Inc. (Atlanta) in association with Gould Evans Associates (Phoenix) – design architects
- Bridgers & Paxton Consulting Engineers, Inc. (Phoenix) – MEP engineers
- Paragon Structural Design (Phoenix) – structural engineers
- Norris Design (Phoenix) – landscape architect
- Johnson Carlier (Tempe, Arizona) – construction manager-at-risk

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. In 2003, The Construction Specifications Institute awarded Lord, Aeck & Sargent its Environmental Sensitivity Award for showing exceptional devotion to the use of sustainable and environmentally friendly materials, and for striving to create functional, sensitive and healthy buildings for clients. In 2007, Lord, Aeck & Sargent was one of the first architecture firms to adopt The 2030 Challenge, an initiative whose ultimate goal is the design of carbon-neutral buildings, or buildings that use no fossil-fuel greenhouse gas-emitting energy to operate, by the year 2030. 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 Gould Evans
Gould Evans is a multi-faceted design firm, providing architecture, planning, graphic and interior design to a range of public and private clients. Since the firm's founding in 1974, Gould Evans has grown to more than 200 professionals in eight offices. The Phoenix office, formed in 1996, has grown to a staff of 40 and emerged with an award-winning portfolio of projects, 85% repeat client ratio, and reputation for unique, fresh design solutions. We believe in the power of superior design, but more importantly, we believe in the power of the collaborative process. For more information, visit www.gouldevans.com.

About the Global Institute of Sustainability
The Global Institute of Sustainability is the hub of Arizona State University's sustainability initiatives. The Institute advances research, education, business practices and the University's operations for an urbanizing world. Its School of Sustainability, the first of its kind in the United States, offers transdisciplinary degree programs that explore and advance practical solutions to environmental, economic and social challenges. For more information, go to http://sustainability.asu.edu, or http://schoolofsustainability.asu.edu.

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