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News Release

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One-of-a-kind Multidisciplinary Packaging Design and Graphics Program Underway in New Building at Clemson University

Building design is about creating campus connections and promoting sustainability

CLEMSON, S.C., July 17, 2009 – Students and researchers at Clemson University are participating in the country's only university program that ties together packaging science, graphic communications, environmental science, manufacturing principles, and marketing aspects.

The multidisciplinary program began early this year in the new $7 million Harris A. Smith Building, home to the Sonoco Institute of Packaging Design and Graphics. Designed by architecture firm Lord, Aeck & Sargent in collaboration with Michael Keeshen & Associates, the 28,000-square-foot structure is on track to become Clemson's first U.S. Green Building Council certified LEED Gold building.

The building was specifically sited and designed to actively relate to the buildings around it, and to engage the people who occupy it as well as those who circulate through and connect in this emerging campus precinct.

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Siting, design are about campus connection

"Just as the Sonoco Institute is about the connection of a wide variety of disciplines, our siting and design of the Harris A. Smith Building is about connection, too – intentional campus connection," said Joe Greco, Lord, Aeck & Sargent principal in charge of the project.

"First," Greco continued, "we sited the building to reinforce the natural campus circulation by linking it along the route to adjacent buildings." He explained that the building's placement aligns two campus axes, extending the neighboring engineering education building's colonnade via a covered pedestrian path as well as linking it visually and symbolically to the architecture education building through a new walkway that connects these two main entrances. The Harris A. Smith Building is clad in the same locally sourced brick – Hanson Dark Palomino – as the other two buildings, reinforcing a visual continuity within the campus precinct.

The Harris A. Smith Building also makes extensive use of glass, allowing those on the pedestrian path to see the innovative research being undertaken in the Sonoco Institute's prototyping, materials and consumer experience laboratories.

The building's interior also provides visual connections through interior windows that allow viewing into labs, putting the "the science on display." Collaborative niches with benches are located in wide corridors so that students and faculty can meet while viewing into the labs. Large glass exterior windows provide substantial natural daylighting into the educational spaces, and a large corner glass window wall marks the public spaces and promotes visual connection from the building interior to the campus and the landscape beyond.

Sensitive siting and locally sourced, recycled-content materials promote sustainability

Responding to the natural topography, the three-story building is nestled into a hillside on its east side such that the facility accommodates a full story of slope within its footprint.

"Since we were working with a limited construction budget, we took an economical approach to building materials and were able to do so without sacrificing functionality. We

chose to clad the lower level plinth with a locally sourced, polished concrete masonry unit that complimented the cast stone used in conjunction with local brick," said Josh Andrews, a Lord, Aeck & Sargent associate who served as the Harris A. Smith Building project architect. "We made economical use of durable materials with high recycled content, such as the polished, integrally colored concrete floors, which have a 20 percent fly ash content."

Andrews noted that other locally sourced materials with recycled content include the building's steel structure, interior carpet and tile, and corridor benches fabricated from wood that was reclaimed from trees on the building site.

Natural light inspires

The building makes extensive use of natural light with large lab and office windows, including upper level clerestory windows into the classroom spaces.

"If you stand inside the building, you can see daylight in almost every direction," said Paul Borick, a project manager in Clemson's Capital Projects Group who was involved with the Harris A. Smith Building from inception through closeout. "The building has sensors that turn the lights on when there isn't enough daylight, and it's interesting to see how often the lights are off."

Metal sunscreens mitigate the sun's exposure on the building's southwest corner glass wall. The building siting preserved a specimen oak tree that also contributes to shading of the larger glass areas. East-facing windows are shaded substantially by a deep roof overhang, vertical masonry piers and the translucent canopy structure over the pedestrian path.

"The fact that the building has been sustainably designed keeps us true to our word," said Chip Tonkin, Sonoco Institute director. "If sustainability is part of how you design a package, then having a building that's sustainable in its design legitimizes what we're trying to do. It shows that we practice what we preach."

Inside the institute

A project of two Clemson colleges – the College of Agriculture, Forestry & Life Sciences, and the College of Business & Behavioral Sciences – the Sonoco Institute of Packaging Design and Graphics comprises laboratory, office and collaboration space. The lower level includes an advanced print technology lab, a digital plate lab, a printed electronics lab and an ink lab as well as a graduate studio, student lounge and mechanical room.

The second level includes the main entry and lobby with an exhibit area, a consumer experience lab, prototyping lab and materials lab, two breakout rooms and a workshop. The signature sculptural staircase extends to the upper level into a large, open collaboration area.

The third floor houses the packaging development lab, offices, a conference room and a 45-seat auditorium.

"The entire building provides a wide open feel that I really like. It's a different feel, very industrial, but it's still open, airy, warm and inviting," Tonkin said.

Funding

The building is named for Harris A. Smith, who was chairman, president and CEO of rigid packaging distributor Smith Container Corp., until its sale a few years ago. Smith made gifts and pledges of $3.7 million, and Sonoco Products Co. $2.5 million for construction of the building and to launch the packaging institute. Most of the money to pay for the structure was donated. Other donors gave equipment that is being used to train students and help industry partners research packaging methods, technology and design.

The project team

The Harris A. Smith Building project team included:

- Lord, Aeck & Sargent (Atlanta office), architect of record, design architect
- Michael Keeshen & Associates (Greenville, S.C.), associate architect

- Clemson University Facilities, Capital Projects, (Clemson, S.C.), project management
- Seamon Whiteside + Associates (Greenville, S.C.), landscape architect
- Newcomb & Boyd (Atlanta), MEP/FP engineer
- Dutton Engineering (Greenville, S.C.), civil engineer
- CMC Cary Engineering (Greenville, S.C.), structural engineer
- Melloul-Blamey Construction (Greenville, S.C. office), general contractor

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.

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