

News Release

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New Augusta State University Student Activities Center Opens
Building Design by 2KM Architects and Lord, Aeck & Sargent
Features Glass "Atrium Street" to Meet Challenge of
Weaving New Building with Modernist-era Library

AUGUSTA, Ga., Nov. 20, 2006 – For many years, faculty and staff at Augusta State University’s Reese Library had been requesting the addition of casual space. Today, as the result of a public/private venture of the Augusta State University Foundation and the University System of Georgia, students are enjoying 48,000 square feet of adjoining casual space in the form of the new Jaguar Student Activities Center.

Opened at the start of the current school year, the two-story center, now fondly referred to as the JSAC, was designed collaboratively by the Augusta firm 2KM Architects, Inc. and the Atlanta office of Lord, Aeck and Sargent. The \$11.1 million building, funded through a Student Center Fee of \$45 per student each semester for 30 years, last month won the University System of Georgia’s 2006 Real Estate & Public/Private Ventures Award.

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Architectural challenge met with glass “atrium street”

The Reese Library, a modernist-era building constructed in 1976, did not easily lend itself to an addition, according to Joe Greco, AIA, Lord, Aeck & Sargent design principal on the project.

“Our biggest challenge was to develop an architectural language that would relate to the 19th century and early 1940s Federalist buildings on Augusta State’s main campus and to weave that contextual language seamlessly into an addition to the modernist-era library,” Greco said. “We met this challenge in part by matching the library’s red brick and cream-colored pre-cast concrete and by creating continuity with horizontal banding. But most important, we created ‘gaps’ between the two architectural styles with a new ‘atrium street’ that connects the library and the JSAC. Clad with transparent glass at the two ends, the new ‘street’ serves as a dual entry for both projects and creates an informal meeting and gathering space. We focused on enhancing openness to the outside and recognized that the facility would serve as a connector linking a number of outdoor spaces together through four separate major entry points.”

The atrium, lit with clerestory windows, functions as a cyber café. According to Kathy Hamrick, Augusta State special coordinator for academic and master planning, the space immediately became one of the most popular campus gathering spots for student groups, serving as the heart of the combined complex and representing “what college should be.”

Hamrick said that in programming and planning the building, “Lord, Aeck & Sargent and 2KM listened carefully to students and faculty and created a solution that that turned out better than anyone anticipated and doesn’t look like it was added on.”

A variety of spaces

The JSAC, located on Augusta State's main campus quad, has become the new social heart of the university. In addition to the cyber café, the building's first floor includes a kitchen, dining area, food court, formal ballroom/banquet hall, student activities offices and study areas. The second floor includes a fitness center, a game room, TV lounges, club meeting rooms, student government offices, campus newspaper and magazine offices, and additional study areas. The cyber café/atrium street features an inviting public staircase leading to a balcony that accesses the game room and fitness center. Informal study nooks are situated along the building's main public face to take advantage of the large windows and views of the campus.

Greco noted that an additional challenge for the architects was to create a lively environment with a variety of spaces – large, small, formal, informal, active and relaxing – for different uses.

That challenge was met and exceeded, according to Hamrick. “The JSAC is absolutely phenomenal,” she said. “Our students used to leave campus once their classes were finished for the day. Now they're all over that place, in the fitness center, the game room, the food court, the connecting space. It's one of the best things that ever happened to make Augusta State look and feel more like a university. And it's had the added benefit of increasing library use; it's a wonderful addition to the Reese library.”

Last project in a master plan

The JSAC was the last major construction project in a 10-year master plan for Augusta State's main Walton Way campus. The plan, which involved the demolition of six outdated academic buildings and the construction of three large academic buildings along with the Student Activities Center, is aimed at making the campus more pedestrian friendly.

The project team

The Augusta State University JSAC project team included:

- 2KM Architects, Inc. (Augusta), architect of record
- Lord, Aeck & Sargent (Atlanta), design architect, associate firm
- R.W. Allen & Associates (Augusta), construction manager
- Carter & Associates (Atlanta), program manager
- Pruet, Ford & Associates (Augusta), mechanical, plumbing and fire protection engineers
- Electrical Design Consultants (Augusta), electrical engineers
- W.R. Toole Engineers (Augusta) civil engineers and landscape architects
- Johnson, Laschober & Associates (Augusta), structural engineers
- Davis Design Group, landscape architect

About Lord, Aeck & Sargent

Founded in 1942, 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; and Chapel Hill, North Carolina. For more information, visit the firm at www.lordaecksargent.com.

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