

News Release

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Contact: Anne Taylor
Lord, Aeck & Sargent
404-253-6710
ataylor@lasarchitect.com

or

Ann Kohut
Kohut Communications Consulting
770-913-9747
annielk@bellsouth.net

New \$12.5 Million Science Facility at Wesleyan College Serves as Campus Centerpiece

Classical Georgian-style architecture fits with older buildings on the historic campus

MACON, Ga., Oct. 8, 2007 – Wesleyan College faculty and students began this year's fall semester with a new science facility, a dynamic campus centerpiece that is the first new academic building constructed on the historic campus in more than 40 years.

The \$12.5 million Munroe Science Center comprises classroom, teaching and research laboratory, and office space in two wings on two floors, with public gathering space in the center area between the wings. The third floor includes a rooftop greenhouse and astronomy platform as well as an enclosed mechanical penthouse. The building houses the biology and chemistry departments, and part of the psychology department.

The 42,000-square-foot structure was designed by architect of record Lord, Aeck & Sargent and features classical Georgian-style architecture in keeping with the buildings on Wesleyan's 79-year-old campus, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Dunwoody-Beeland Architects, which designed the two buildings on either side of the Munroe Science Center, served as associate architect.

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“The Munroe Science Center is a bright, cheery state-of-the-art space that does justice to the excellence of our science curricula,” said biology department chair Jim Ferrari, who served as “project shepherd,” or liaison between Wesleyan’s science faculty and the architectural design and construction team. “We are especially excited about our 11 new teaching labs, which combine space for both traditional lectures and hands-on lab exercises, and with several new features we didn’t have before – a built-in deionized water system, an environmental room, a greenhouse and an astronomy deck.”

Design challenges

Helen Crawford, Lord, Aeck & Sargent senior project architect/designer/manager, said that the design and construction team was challenged with creating a large, Georgian-style building on a limited budget.

“It was important to our client and to us that the building fit in with the others on campus. This required that we use classical materials, which are typically more expensive, and that we not strip down the detail,” Crawford said. “So we worked closely with the other project team members to design a super-efficient mechanical system, and that allowed the building’s exterior decoration to remain in the budget.”

Clad in brick and cast stone, the building’s exterior is rich in texture, featuring both Flemish bond and basket weave brickwork patterns. Three arches grace the entrance on the south façade, which faces the campus quad, in keeping with the other buildings that face the quad. Six Doric-style columns ornament the front entrance on the north façade, which faces the main road leading into the city of Macon.

Another design challenge, Crawford noted, was to maintain the proper building proportions characteristic of Georgian architecture since the laboratories inside have higher floor-to-floor ratios than traditional rooms. “We had to be sure that the rhythm of the façade

elements – the windows, stone accents, belt courses around the building, and cornices – were all balanced and in proportion to each other and to the whole façade,” Crawford said.

A centerpiece for the campus

Wesleyan’s original master plan called for a chapel that would become the campus centerpiece. The Munroe Science Center is now sited in the spot – in between two other buildings (Tate Hall and Taylor Hall) – originally intended for the chapel, which was never built.

“The new science building has a larger footprint and longer façade than the proposed chapel,” Crawford said, “so we considered two things in our design that allowed us to be in keeping with the master plan’s intent to provide a dynamic campus centerpiece while ensuring that we retained the individual character of Tate and Taylor halls.

“The first consideration was the centralization of the roof element across the middle body of the building, so that one’s eye is drawn to the porch and columns on the north façade, and to the center of the building and site. We reinforced this by placing two vertical brick chimneys on the roof to conceal the laboratory fume hood exhaust. Our second consideration was to hold the roof back at the end portions of the building to allow the eye to rest, as well as break up the overall length of the façade. This gives some implied breathing room between the roof lines of the new building and the adjacent buildings, and it enhances and retains the individual identities of both Tate and Taylor halls. Vertical stair towers provide the bookends to the new building, and bring one’s eye back to the front of the site,” Crawford said.

A resource-sensitive building and site

The Munroe Science Center and site are resource-sensitive, using locally crafted brick known as Wesleyan Brick as well as local landscape plantings. The design and construction team

limited the amount of cut and fill of the earth in siting the building. Inside, the building features energy- and water-saving devices such as occupancy sensors and waterless urinals.

The project team

- Lord, Aeck & Sargent (Atlanta office), architect of record
- Dunwody/Beeland Architects (Macon, Ga.), associate architect
- The Whiting-Turner Contracting Co. (Atlanta office), construction manager
- Pi-Tech Inc. (Macon, Ga.), structural engineer
- Nottingham, Brook & Pennington Engineers (Macon, Ga.), MEP/FP engineer
- Carter & Sloope Inc. (Macon, Ga.), civil engineer
- Waveguide Consulting (Atlanta), AV consultant
- Wimberly Treadwell, landscape design

About Lord, Aeck & Sargent

Lord, Aeck & Sargent is an award-winning architectural firm serving clients in scientific, academic, historic preservation, arts, 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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