

News Release

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Newest Residence Hall at Young Harris College Completes “Progressive Housing” Continuum

The Towers, for freshmen only, is designed to help them acclimate to college life

YOUNG HARRIS, Ga., May 27, 2014 – At [Young Harris College](#), when talking about the institution’s newest residence hall, you could recite the adage, “What’s old is new again,” and on the face of it, you’d be right.

YHC, which less than six years ago began its transition from a two-year to a four-year institution, hired architecture and planning firm [Lord Aeck Sargent](#) (LAS) to design the Towers— a 226-bed residence hall that opened in August 2013.

With double occupancy rooms arranged around communal bathrooms and a shared common area, the Towers sounds a lot like a mid-20th century dormitory building. But, there’s a twist.

“Progressive housing”

Targeting YHC’s first-year students, the \$12.5 million Towers is a key component of the College’s on-campus student housing program. It is the latest of three projects completed over the past five years with Lord Aeck Sargent as part of a strategy called “progressive housing.”

“Progressive housing is the concept that student housing is intentionally designed in a targeted, varying manner so that it parallels a student’s level of maturity and years on campus,” said Jackson Kane, a student housing specialist at LAS, which also designed the other two components of YHC’s comprehensive student housing strategy.

The Towers is for freshmen only. As such, it limits the space in the living units and maximizes common spaces in order to encourage socialization and community building among students just entering college. The social spaces bring students out of their rooms in a very intentional way.

Enotah Hall, which opened at YHC in Fall 2009, is primarily occupied by sophomores. Like The Towers, Enotah has a significant amount of common area focused on learning support such as music practice rooms, study balconies and group meeting space, along with an exterior amphitheatre. But unlike The Towers, the living space is within the units, which are designed as double occupancy bedroom suites with a common living space, a kitchenette and two bathrooms, each shared by four students.

The Village, which LAS designed for upperclassmen, is comprised of self-contained apartments in residentially scaled structures that emphasize the transition these students will soon be making to independent living.

“The level of needs between freshmen and upperclassmen are completely different,” said Stuart Miller, YHC assistant dean of students. “Freshmen are learning to do laundry, while upperclassmen are figuring out how to cook. That’s why The Towers is such a good transition spot for incoming freshmen who are in the beginning stages of learning to live independently.”

Miller noted that research shows how important it is for students to feel connected to their peers within the first six weeks at college. “This period is critical because if freshmen have that feeling of connection, they’re more likely to stay through all four years of college.

“The Towers is not just a recruiting tool for YHC; we’re also using it as a retention tool,” Miller continued. “I feel that as we move forward at the College, we’ve made a commitment to help students through the progressive housing continuum.”

The Towers is ideal for freshmen because the program actively promotes the use of residential common spaces through the creation of distinct “pods.”

“The way the pods are designed, with easy access to shared living spaced adjacent to the bedrooms, encourages students to interact socially with others their age who are taking a lot of the same basic core courses, helping them to acclimate to college life,” LAS’ Kane said. “It encourages them to want to matriculate through all four years of college by discouraging isolating behaviors from the very beginning.”

The pod concept

The Towers consists of three pavilions totaling approximately 57,500 square feet. Tower A is four residential stories. Tower B, located in the middle, is three residential stories over a lobby/reception level with common areas utilized by students in all the pavilions, and Tower C is three residential stories. Each floor in a pavilion is called a “pod.” Pavilions are joined by glass-enclosed connectors so that students can move easily between pods to visit one another without going outside.

Each pod is a small community containing 11 to 12 double-occupancy bedrooms, one single unit for a resident assistant, a common living room and two community bathrooms. These shared bathrooms have been “up-scaled” so that even though they are community-style, “they don’t seem like bathrooms from the ’70s,” YHC’s Miller said. The features include subway tile floors, granite countertops and large wooden louvered toilet stall doors, more like those found in a spa.

“Bedrooms are intentionally not overly large. They’re meant to push you out into beautiful living spaces to meet your peers,” Miller said. “The common rooms are very welcoming and conducive to hanging out, with breathtaking views. They each have two couches, plush chairs, meeting tables and 55-inch, Internet-ready flat-screen TVs, so you can hook up your Xbox or watch Netflix.”

Interior design “trendy”

While The Towers’ exterior – red brick, cast stone with Tennessee flagstone veneer, and aluminum panels – uses materials similar to the other buildings that face YHC’s campus lawn, Miller described the interior design as “trendy and unique.”

“We wanted each pavilion to have its own individuality, and we achieved this by giving each its own complementary color scheme in the common areas,” said Claire Oviatt, a senior interior designer at LAS. “As an example, one of the pavilions has a combination of solid gold carpet tiles and organic patterned tiles of gold, moss and taupe in the common areas. The walls are a matching gold. Floors in all of the bedrooms are covered with luxury vinyl planks that have a wood grain look.

“In selecting finishes, we looked at quality, durability and cost efficiency, always with the thought of designing for high-volume use, a less institutional look and diverse student personalities,” Oviatt added.

“We’ve received positive feedback about the design elements from our students,” Miller said. He added that some incoming freshmen were unfamiliar with the pod concept and opted to live in other campus housing. “Two weeks into the semester, they were trying to get into The Towers. The building is full, and it’s a good success story for us.”

Green design and products

It is anticipated that The Towers will be awarded LEED certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. Some of the green strategies and products incorporated into the design include: a hydronic heat pump HVAC system with energy recovery; extensive daylighting in the common spaces; significant use of recycled construction materials – regional or locally sourced construction materials such as Tennessee flagstone, wood, drywall, luxury vinyl tile flooring planks and the carpeting; energy-efficient lighting fixtures and lamping; motion sensors for lighting controls; water-efficient fixtures; and low-VOC finishes.

The project team

The Towers at Young Harris College project team included:

- Lord Aeck Sargent (Atlanta office) – architect
- Brailsford & Dunlavey (Atlanta office) – program manager
- Eberly & Associates, Atlanta – civil engineer and landscape architect
- KSi Structural Engineers (Atlanta office) – structural engineer
- Andrews, Hammock & Powell (Macon, Ga.) – MEP/FP engineer
- DPR Hardin Construction (Atlanta office of DPR Construction) – construction manager

About Lord Aeck Sargent

Lord, Aeck & Sargent Inc. – dba Lord Aeck Sargent – is an award-winning architecture, design and urban planning firm serving clients in academic, historic preservation, scientific, arts and cultural, multi-family housing and mixed-use, and urban design and planning markets. 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 is also calling for increased transparency in the building products industry by urging manufacturers to disclose the chemical components of their products utilizing the [Health Product Declaration](#),™ an industry standard format for conveying details about product content and associated health information, or [Declare](#), the “nutrition label” for building products launched by the International Living Future Institute.

Lord Aeck Sargent has offices in Ann Arbor, Michigan; Atlanta, Georgia; Austin, Texas; Chapel Hill, North Carolina; Lexington, Kentucky; and Washington, D.C. For more information, visit the firm at www.lordaecksargent.com.

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