

LORD AECK SARGENT

New Academic Building
Warren Wilson College
Asheville, NC



Warren Wilson College describes its campus as being inextricably linked to the natural landscape. Situated in the Swannanoa Valley, an emphasis is placed on using sustainable materials and consideration of form, seasonal, interest and wise use of the area. The concept that the campus is the students' laboratory is literal as students work a 110-acre farm, pre-vet students care for animals and forestry and tree conservation are a hands-on education.

When the school embarked on its first new instructional building in 18 years with Lord Aeck Sargent, those factors and the emphasis on student involvement played a large role. LAS architects worked closely with Warren Wilson to design a new academic building in place of the former Carson Hall. Classes from all departments are held in the two-story 15,000 square-foot facility, which features 19 faculty offices and six flexible learning and meeting spaces, ranging from 15-person seminar rooms to a 40-person flex classroom, as well as a large multi-use common atrium.

The project began in 2013 and officially opened for use in 2018. Responsive design considered the environment and future use to ensure the building could adapt to the college's future and changing needs, including classes, lectures, study and meeting rooms for clubs and other activities, special events and large conferences. All walls between meeting spaces were designed with the ability to be reconfigured to adapt to the college's changing needs, allowing the building to accommodate groups as large as 60 by combining classrooms, and up to 150 by opening up the atrium.

A modern and clean style reflects the natural elements of the surrounding areas, while a modern aesthetic ensures its sustainability into the future. LAS strategically placed the building in view of the Swannanoa Valley, arranging walls and windows for the most efficient use and effect on the temperature.