

BEST OF
2007
AWARDS

Robert B. Goergen Hall for Biomedical Engineering and Optics

AWARD OF MERIT: Higher Education

The University of Rochester had the unusual plan for a building that would house its entire biomedical engineering department as well as wrap around an existing building housing the optics department.

After more than a year of construction, the Robert B. Goergen Hall for Biomedical Engineering and Optics opened in May. The \$24 million, six-story, 101,000-sq-ft facility envelops the old Wilmot Optics Building, integrating the two into one greater academic facility.

Goergen Hall has a 155-seat lecture hall as well as space for research, teaching and administrative services. A multistory "collaboration atrium" is perhaps its most distinctive element, an open, sunlit space with clear views of all floors and areas.

The hall has connections to the Wilmot Optics Building on all floors and even has a bridge linking it to the adjacent Computer Studies Building. Comprised of 800 tons of structural steel and 3,500 cu yds of concrete, the hall's facade incorporates limestone and brick materials to match the architectural themes of the surrounding buildings.

Rochester's LeChase Construction had a leadership role on the project team, working with the owner, University of Rochester; the architect-of-record, Perkins+Will of New York City; and SWBR Architects, also of Rochester.

Construction began in January 2005 with the demolition of two small existing buildings on the site. Initially there were scheduling problems because construction crews had access to only one of the entrances to the campus, but rescheduling and the occasional redirection of motor and pedestrian traffic prevented any significant delays.

Limited access to the building due to



the surrounding structures meant little lay-down space for construction materials, requiring the use of just-in-time delivery schedules.

The Wilmot Building optics department remained occupied and operational throughout construction of the new hall, and LeChase project members met regularly with university officials about preventing excess noise and vibrations.

"We were really building around the old structure, in some places within 6 in. of it," says project executive Mike Mallon of LeChase. "It was a bit of a challenge maintaining the spacing between the two structures in order to prevent fire transmission and keep the vibrations isolated."

Previous experience with the university has taught LeChase to carefully select times for disruptive activities such as foundation demolition, soil compacting and pile driving.

A 100-year-old utility tunnel running underneath the site had to be monitored constantly as well to prevent any structur-

Key Players

Owner: University of Rochester

Construction Manager: LeChase Construction

Architect of Record: Perkins+Will Architects

Architect: SWBR Architects

al damage from the construction above. As a result workers could not use normal backfill techniques to reinforce the partial basement foundation but were able to keep the project on schedule by devising a plan to use a "flowable" fill in small lifts.

The overall goal for the university was to have the building blend into the existing University of Rochester campus. With multiple links to the existing Wilmot Building and a facade facing onto a newly formed quad, Goergen Hall fits into the surrounding style, while providing a new landmark for the campus. <<