BUILDING DESIGN+CONSTRUCTION
INSPIRING THE BUILDING TEAM

2009 BUILDING TEAM AWARDS

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Cronkite Communication School Speaks to Phoenix Redevelopment

Phoenix wanted to revitalize its downtown; Arizona State University wanted stronger ties to the city. Together they used building information modeling to plan a new campus and put a media icon at its center.

By Jay W. Schneider, Senior Editor

The city of Phoenix has sprawling suburbs, but its outward expansion caused the downtown core to stagnate—a problem not uncommon to other major metropolitan areas. Reviving the city became a hotbed issue for Mayor Phil Gordon, who envisioned a vibrant downtown that offered opportunities for living, working, learning, and playing.

The Mayor's plans for downtown redevelopment involved public-private partnerships, which led him to Arizona State University President Michael Crow. Crow was interested in expanding ASU's presence within the metro Phoenix area (ASU's main campus is in Tempe), so the city and school jointly developed a master plan for a new campus on nine city blocks. In 2006, voters approved $223 million in bonds, with $71 million slated for construction of the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, the new campus's first facility.

Although the building's design is rectangular, architects downplayed its business by utilizing different window styles, adding exterior balconies, bumping out stairwells, and playing with materials and colors.

The RFP for a design-build team was won by the alliance of HDR Architecture (executive architect), Ehrlich Architects (design architect), and Sundt Construction (GC) and required the team to adhere to an absolute fixed budget and a maximum 20-month timeline from award to occupancy certificate.

The Building Team utilized integrated project delivery and BIM to stay on time and on budget. Among other things, IPD and BIM enabled the Building Team to create detailed cost models instead of cost estimates, so that by the close of business every Friday the project budget was rectified.

IPD also helped with the fast-track schedule by allowing the project to be broken up into multiple packages, each with its own senior IPD leader and production team. The strategy allowed foundations to be poured before the superstructure design was complete and before the exterior skin was finalized. A special team was assigned to acquiring entitlements and building permits to accommodate the project's breakneck pace, and the city helped expedite the review process.

The building's basic rectilinear form—a simple 30-foot-square exposed structural concrete column grid, burnished concrete block walls, and insulated cladding—was a practical choice for the project's budget and timeline. It enabled the Building Team to maximize square footage: ASU had a lengthy list of features they needed to squeeze into the six-story, 223,000-sf facility. The Walter Cronkite School of

BUILDING TEAM AWARDS

PROJECT SUMMARY

Silver Award

Arizona State University Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication
Phoenix, Ariz.

Building Team

Submitting firm: HDR Architecture Inc. (executive architect)
Owner: Arizona State University
Developer: City of Phoenix
Architect: Ehrlich Architects
Structural engineer: Caruso Turley Scott Inc.
MEP engineer: HDR Architecture Inc.
General contractor: Sundt Construction

General Information

Project size: 223,000 sf
Construction cost: $71 million
Construction time: March 2007 to May 2008
Delivery method: Design/build

A five-story light sculpture designed by artist Paul Deeb of VOX Arts replaces what would be traditional exterior windows in a south stairwell.

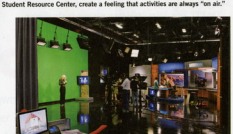
The two-story First Amendment Forum serves as the school's "living room," with a mezzanine level offering extra seating. Large windows between the forum and adjoining spaces, such as conference rooms and the Library & Student Resource Center, create a feeling that activities are always "on air."

Journalism and Mass Communication is sandwiched between the building's ground floor, which houses the main lobby and retail and restaurant space, and the top floor, which is utilized by the city's PBS station, KAET/Channel 8. The university space includes 12 classrooms, seven working newsrooms, two state-of-the-art television studios, a library, a 150-seat theater-style auditorium, and a 1,500-sf exhibition gallery.

The centerpiece is a large "living room," dubbed the First Amendment Forum. This two-story space—with mezzanine—is used as a gathering area for students during the day, while in the evening it becomes a public forum for students and industry leaders to engage in discussion and debate. Five hi-def flat-screen televisions and a large hi-def rear projector broadcast the day's news and other events. Walter Cronkite's famous sign-off, "And that's the way it is," is inscribed on one wall.

To moderate the monolithic effect of the rectangular building, the Building Team sliced off a bit here and there and bumped out stairwells several feet from exterior walls. A combination of thin vertical and long horizontal windows, a wraparound exterior balcony, and multicolored corrugated metal cladding in a pattern inspired by FCC's radio spectrum chart further break up what could be a blocky exterior.

The facility opened in May 2008, and is adjacent to a pedestrian boulevard and across the street from a newly completed high-rise residence hall and a student union created by the adaptive reuse of a historic post office building. The city's new light rail system stops near the main entrance. The downtown now bustles with student life.



Studio spaces were built out quickly, but during interior improvements the floors received a top coating to create a camera-friendly flatness.

The project impressed Building Team Awards judge Dan Huntington. "Twenty months from start to certificate of occupancy on a building this size—that's pretty impressive," says Huntington, SE, PE, LEED AP, associate principal at KJWW Engineering Consultants in Rock Island, Ill. "They had a very large task put in front of them, and they were very successful." BD+C

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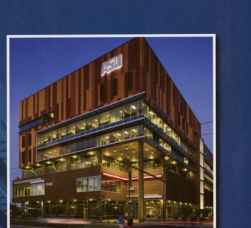
SILVER AWARD

Arizona State University Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Phoenix, Ariz.

Georgia-Pacific Gypsum products used on the project:

DensGlass™ Exterior Sheathing and DensGlass™ Ultra Shaftliner

When time is of the essence on a building project, specifying materials that can help get the job completed on schedule is of utmost importance. Faced with this challenge, the Building Team for Arizona State's new journalism and communications school facility selected Georgia-Pacific's DensGlass™ Exterior Sheathing and DensGlass™ Ultra Shaftliner. The Dens Family of fiberglass-mat products for interior and exterior walls, shafts, roof coverboard and tile applications don't wick moisture and come with weather exposure limited warranties.



Jon W. Griffin, AIA, Senior Project Architect with HDR Architecture Inc., the project's design architect, says the Building Team had just 20 months from project award to certificate of occupancy. Griffin says he specified DensGlass Ultra Shaftliner for elevator and stairwell shafts because the project was fast paced and using the fiberglass-mat gypsum panels allowed the team to start interior trades before dry-in. Smart material choices like this helped the team meet the project's fixed budget and extremely tight schedule.

"the project was fast paced, and the GP products enabled the Building Team to construct portions of the building in advance"

Jon W. Griffin
AIA, Senior Project Architect
with HDR Architecture Inc.