

High-Profile FEATURE: MOUNT IDA COLLEGE

# Mt. Ida College Gets to Have its Cake and Eat it Too

The reaction of Rod Shaffert, vice president of Cutler Associates' Scholastic Division, to Jim Alexander's initial call regarding his firm's newest project at Mount Ida College was simple: "You mean... they want to have their cake and eat it too!"

Alexander, principal of Finegold Alexander + Associates Inc, explained that the Newton, Mass.-based, private college needed a new residence hall to be fully designed and built in the next 16 months and they had an extremely tight \$8 million budget. What's more is they really wanted a "wow" factor to the design – something that would make it distinctive and attract students to campus.

"You've come to the right place," Shaffert immediately responded, and the two brought their teams together to devise a design-build approach that achieved the impressive design that was desired while satisfying the required budget and schedule constraints.

Through collaborative planning meetings involving faculty, staff, alumni, trustees, and students, an innovative "pod" design emerged that combines elements of corridor and suite-style residences, while fostering more interaction and community building among students. Two outdoor courtyards



Mount Ida College's new residence hall features a "pod" design that combines the best elements of traditionally-programmed dormitories while fostering interaction and community building among students. (Photo credit: Anton Grassl/Esto)

connected by a grand and open staircase surround the building. The courtyards tie the edges of the campus and provide outdoor gathering places for students, faculty, staff, and visitors.

The 36,000sf brick and stucco structure comprises two, three-story wings that are joined by a striking glass bridge that glows at night. "The North and South Buildings are

simple square buildings, one of the most cost-efficient types of structures that can be built," explains Shaffert. "But by beginning with this basic arrangement, we not only provided the foundation for the pod concept, we reserved enough of the budget to add in the 'wow' factor – the connecting glass bridge."

Housing 136 students and two professional staff members, the building's façade blends with the traditional architecture of the Mount Ida campus, while the interior offers the latest technology and modern amenities. Each pod houses a small community of 22 students who live in different types and sizes

of rooms surrounding a common bath area. Living and learning spaces that encourage student interaction are an integral part of the facility. Lounges and study alcoves are located in the bridges and hallways between the two wings on each floor.

Reflecting the College's commitment to environmental responsibility, the new complex incorporates sustainable design and construction concepts equivalent to the requirements of LEED Silver certification. Energy efficient features include the use of recycled materials, solar hot water, and energy-efficient lighting with intelligent controls that reduce energy use.

The project was completed on a 16-month overall design and construction schedule with a construction period of 11 months.

### Project Team for Mt. Ida

- Owner - Mount Ida College
- General Contractor - Cutler Associates, Inc.
- Architect - Finegold Alexander + Assoc. Inc.
- Structural Engineer - HTA Kimball Chase
- Engineer - BLW Engineers, Inc.
- Landscape Architect - Marc Mazzarelli Associates



Mount Ida College President, Dr. Carol Matteson (center), gets ready to "eat her cake" as she celebrates with Rod Shaffert (right) from Cutler Associates and Jim Alexander (left) from Finegold Alexander + Associates Inc at a recent celebration.

### Words from the Architect

"We were proud to have worked alongside Cutler to deliver a state-of-the-art residence hall for Mount Ida College," says Jim Alexander, principal at Finegold Alexander + Associates Inc, architects on the project. "After we completed the College's campus master plan we knew they had significant need for increased residential capacity and we knew they were constrained by time and budget challenges.

"I was confident that Cutler was the right team to bring in. The first project growing out of the master plan was a residence hall, and teaming with Cutler allowed us to begin implementation of the plan on an accelerated schedule.

"With one successful project under their belt the College is continuing with the next phase of the master plan for an enhanced campus experience for a growing student population. The College said they wanted a 'wow' in the design of the new building and we were able to achieve that on-time and on-budget through team work and design innovation.

"We are very pleased that it was a good experience for the College, as well as the design/build team. We look forward to our next project with Cutler."

