

## Sense Of Place

### **Sense of Place: School of Education building at The College of New Jersey**

*79,000-square-foot facility contains classrooms, faculty offices, and areas for hands-on science teacher training*

By: Melissa Ezarik

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A new School of Education building proves it's possible to maintain the identities of campus departments while also fostering collaboration. The 79,000-square-foot facility at The College of New Jersey contains classrooms, faculty offices, and areas for hands-on science teacher training, science pedagogy research, group dynamics observation, and model classrooms.



A accessible sculpture adjacent to the main entrance of The College of New Jersey's School of Education building references the early American one-room schoolhouse.

### **Challenges**

Founded in 1855 as the state's first teacher education program, the college now has seven academic schools and six education programs. The education building had been updated over the years, but the design "didn't encourage any collaboration between faculty and students, between students and students, or between faculty and faculty," says Lynda Kane-Rothermel, campus architect and director of planning.

Cramped faculty offices didn't even have room for a student to sit. Wayfinding was another issue. "People don't realize the amount of public interaction that happens with a school of education," says John C. Kohlhas, a principal at Environetics, the project's design firm. But the facility's design, which is referred to as a donut, meant "you could wander around in circles."

### **Solution**

As with most campus construction projects, building wish lists were bigger than the budget and space. To help accommodate needs, each department got a defined entry location, yet kept the edges "somewhat porous" with a few shared classrooms and conference rooms, says Kohlhas. The building, designed to LEED Silver standards, is highly efficient, with 75 percent of usable space.

Visible from the main two-story lobby are the dean's office, two departmental entries, and two demonstration classrooms. And the main intersections of corridors contain high-action spaces like a café and multipurpose room. "It's really hard when you go into the building to lose anything," quips Kohlhas.

The corridors (kept accessible, with no stairs) have a mix of classrooms and offices located on both sides, with fabric-covered walls. "This encourages departments to display student work," says Kane-Rothermel. "Everybody can see it and talk about it in the hallway."

"Everybody" doesn't just mean the education department. A bright multipurpose room overlooking a lake is a favorite spot for campus events. "Faculty and administrators saw that welcoming space as an advantage," says Kohlhas. "It gets them to be a college that's not insular."

**COMPLETED:** June 2013

**COST:** \$33.4 million

**DESIGN:** Environetics (Philadelphia)

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