Johnson & Wales University Breaks Ground
On New $40 Million Engineering and Science Academic Center

By Madeline Parmenter
Memories of one of the worst New England winters on record quickly faded away as the first shovelfuls of dirt were tossed marking the official start of construction on Johnson & Wales University’s (JWU) newest academic building, which will soon be the home of a $40 million engineering and science academic center. JWU becomes the first shovel in the ground for land made available by the re-alignment of Interstate-195 in Providence, RI. The building is being constructed on a parcel of land the university purchased in 2012.
Breaking Ground continued

“What we are constructing represents the future of Johnson & Wales as we expand our science, technology, and engineering programs, and the future of the workforce where our graduates will begin their careers,” said Marie Bernardo-Sousa, L.P.D., JWU senior vice president of administration.

This is the first academic building ever constructed by JWU on the Downcity Providence Campus in its over 100-plus years history. “Typically, we acquire existing properties and renovate the buildings to meet needs,” said JWU Project Manager Jason Witham. “This is a change for us. It’s particularly exciting as we were able to program the building from the ground up versus having to deal with an existing structure.” The center will be part of the stretch of land that state and city officials hope will attract new construction.

“The students who will be educated in this new academic building will be prepared for the jobs our Governor and other state leaders are trying to attract to Rhode Island,” said JWU Providence Campus President and COO Mim Runey, L.P.D. “JWU tries to anticipate market demand for college graduates. That’s why we started Rhode Island’s first physician assistant program and are looking to expand health sciences.”
Twenty-first century design will meet 1900’s style when the project is completed. JWU’s newest building will be next door to and encircling Johnson Hall (originally the Swedish Workingmen’s Association Hall) which is home to classrooms, a burger restaurant and Starbucks. The Hall was built in 1925, and acquired by JWU in the mid-1960’s. “We were challenged to ensure that the architecture of the new academic center respected the existing buildings in the area while it also reflected a look to the future,” said Witham.

When completed, the three-story structure will have a graphic design studio and innovation, robotics, and network simulation labs, as well as biology, anatomy, physics, physiology and chemistry labs. As with many of the university’s other recent construction projects, this new academic building has been designed to meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification.

Additionally, the building will also have five classrooms, a food service area, outdoor courtyard, open areas for student lounges, and assembly space for approximately 100 people.

The new academic center will incorporate flexible classroom designs, student collaborative areas, and learning through mobile access technologies and BYOD (Bring
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Your Own Device) methods. Professors will have the space to incorporate this style of learning that is currently unavailable to students due to lack of space. The center will have three new studio-based labs for the graphic design program. This will help JWU meet NASAD (National Association of Schools of Art and Design) requirements of accreditation, the national standard for all art and design schools. There also will be a 120 seat presentation space. For engineering students, smart boards will be on the walls with LCD presentation screens. The new robotics lab and innovation lab will be in bright and windowed rooms on the first floor, inviting passersby to look in and see what students are creating.

The building is scheduled to be completed by July 2016.

Founded in 1914, Johnson & Wales University is a private, nonprofit, accredited institution with more than 16,000 graduate, undergraduate and online students at its four campuses in Providence, R.I.; North Miami, Fla.; Denver, Colo.; and Charlotte, N.C. An innovative educational leader, the university offers degree programs in arts and sciences, business, culinary arts, education, nutrition, hospitality, physician assistant studies, engineering and design. Its unique model integrates arts and sciences and industry-focused education with work experience and leadership opportunities, inspiring students to achieve professional success and lifelong personal growth. The university’s impact is global, with alumni from 119 countries pursuing careers worldwide. For more information, visit www.jwu.edu.

Groundbreaking for the new School of Engineering & Design at Johnson & Wales University in Providence, RI. The building is scheduled to be completed in July 2016. From left: Jason Witham, executive director of facilities; Tom Dwyer, vice chancellor and provost; Mim Runey, LP.D., Providence Campus president and chief operating officer; Marie Bernardo-Sousa, LP.D., senior vice president of administration; and Rob Taylor, vice president of facilities and construction management.

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