

ACAI NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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NSU's Health Professions Division Campus Sets Standards for University and Architectural Excellence

Fort Lauderdale, FL (October 2007) -- With hindsight comes near-perfect vision, especially with the luxury of looking back over the course of a full decade. Regardless of the degree of prior planning, pretty much any path, in retrospect, can be picked apart in that sort of time frame.

But not always. Sometimes a plan for the ages comes together.

Slightly more than 10 years after the beautiful, state-of-the-art Nova Southeastern University's Health Professions Division Campus debuted in 1996, reviews -- and continued expansion -- are still enthusiastically thumb's-up for the design and functionality of the 21-acre medical campus.

"The elaborate, intense planning that went into this massive, from-the-ground-up project continues to pay huge dividends for our students and faculty," states Dr. Frederick Lippman, Chancellor of the Health Professions Division of Nova Southeastern University in Davie, Florida. "We were very fortunate that, when the time came to choose an architect for our multi-faceted medical campus, ACAI Associates was ready to head our team. And now we're pleased to again be teaming with Adolfo Cotilla and his talented staff."

ACAI Associates is an award-winning, full-service architecture firm with offices in Broward, Miami-Dade and Palm Beach Counties. Founded in 1985, the firm's principal, Adolfo Cotilla, AIA, has a special passion for designing educational buildings and campuses.

"What could be more important or far reaching?" asks Cotilla. "There is no question that high-tech, safe, carefully designed buildings and campuses are paramount for optimal learning. NSU's important teaching and learning environments will have a direct affect on tomorrow's medical advances."

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The logo for ACAI Associates, featuring the word "acai" in a lowercase, red, sans-serif font.

“Moreover, we know that another byproduct of designing superb, flowing campuses and research and development facilities is that more highly-cited researchers and scientists will be attracted to South Florida. And that will, in turn, draw investment from government agencies and private businesses. That all equates to a windfall for our State’s economy. We pour our souls and talents into such worthwhile projects because they’re tremendously gratifying work from a great many perspectives.”

Cotilla and his architecture team designed the state-of-the-art Health Professions Division Campus in 1996. That \$40 million, 800,000-square-foot project included 11 auditoriums with distance-learning video conferencing and computer hook-up capabilities; a full medical library; wet laboratory teaching classrooms; a teaching clinic component; areas for administration, food service, student services, a museum, nurses and custodial services; its own physical plant; and a connected parking garage for 1,500 spaces.

Perhaps the largest single medical campus ever built from scratch, the overall NSU project -- now more than one-million square feet in area -- is the signature design challenge in an impressive portfolio of education-oriented projects tackled by ACAI. Since its opening in 1996, ACAI has continued to play an active role in expanding the Health Professions Division’s medical library by adding “Assembly 2” -- a 38,000-square-foot teaching and seminar facility. Additionally, ACAI was recently awarded the architectural design contract for the forthcoming 315,000-square-foot Center for Collaborative Research (CCR) on the NSU campus. The \$70 million project is earmarked for completion in 2009.

“Importantly, Cotilla’s approach from the very beginning continues to this very day -- he and his staff are singularly focused on the creation of a highly efficient, highly functional design for our campus, and to get there they have consistently talked to and listened to the people who will be using the facilities,” says Dr. Lippman.

ACAI fast-tracked the Health Professions Division Campus in less than 16 months, on budget and ahead of schedule. The campus -- a result of a great many intense charrettes combined with value-engineering sessions -- established a handsome image for the school while embracing sustainability and energy-saving materials.

“Clearly, we had to truly understand who the campus’ clients were -- from students to faculty, staff and support vendors -- and what each user-constituent was aiming to accomplish. That critical exercise allowed us to interpret everyone’s needs with vision and architectural skill,” says Cotilla.

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To institute a “walking campus,” the parking garage -- which is now slated for expansion in the new CCR phase -- was located on the eastern leg of the L-shaped site. Covered and intersecting walkways connect the parking garage and campus buildings. Set at an angle at the center of the medical campus -- and adding a dynamic twist of interest -- is the principal Assembly Building.

Designed and built in keeping with the principles of environmental sustainability, the medical campus’ administration, lab and clinic buildings have identical construction -- reinforced concrete columns and post-tension beams with concrete floor and roof slabs and masonry infill. The exterior insulation and finishing system was selected for the buildings’ skin because it resembles stone, is energy- and cost-efficient, and requires little maintenance. Materials and colors were selected to emphasize the architectural proportions of the facades and extensive colonnades.

Out of functional necessity, the high-tech lab and clinic buildings were designed as windowless structures. To balance the enclosed look, ACAI introduced bright, spacious passageways and lobbies featuring interior- and exterior-facing glass walls, high ceilings and clerestory windows for added daylighting. Floor designs accent the interior spaces with colorful tile which, with their distinctive patterning, are used as guides to each college’s classroom/lab areas.

The signature assembly building contains two large auditoriums (500 and 250 seats) and eight 125-seat lecture halls. Its construction is also concrete post and beams with steel truss and joist roofing systems and composite roof decking. A standing-seam metal roof vault spans the wide central section, creating internal height -- a design feature that is repeated in several of the other buildings on the campus.

The first phase of the campus was designed as “mega” high-tech, with all five colleges fitted for state-of-the-art equipment and facilities. Each department submitted to ACAI laboratory and work specifications and requirements, resulting in practical designs and programming that time has proven works extremely efficiently and well. For example, infrastructure was installed to accommodate future Internet and database access -- all pre “WiFi.” Input beyond “tech” resulted in the anatomy lab areas’ walls being treated with epoxy paint and steel paneling and seamless, chemical-resistant vinyl flooring to facilitate cleaning. Also, within the occupational therapy lab and clinic spaces is a “simple apartment” that is equipped with a full kitchen, bath and bedroom to accommodate areas of simulation for physical and occupational therapy use.

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“We not only have to design and build educational facilities that will stand the test of time from a construction standpoint,” states Cotilla. “We also have to design smart classrooms, labs, auditoriums and the like so as to accommodate tomorrow’s audiovisual, telecommunications and information technology.”

Mechanical systems throughout the campus were designed with an eye toward maximum energy efficiency, including a water-cooled chiller pump system with air-handling equipment in each building. A computerized energy management system controls temperatures in each designated zone and, where practical, entry-controlled automated light-switching systems have been installed. As stated by Cotilla, “Architects have a responsibility to take the initiative and play a leading role in reducing the impact of our work on the environment. In today’s world, if an architect’s work is responsible, it’s inherently sustainable design, and that’s an approach that we brought to and will continue to incorporate in the entire medical campus.”

“NSU has a special mission as a leader in biomedical research and outreach to the community through our health centers,” says Dr. Lippman. “ACAI Associates has helped us realize this very special vision and goal.”

“As vast a project as has been the design of the two phases of the medical campus, we’ve stayed true to our focus on a seamless, collaborative process -- from the ground up, literally and figuratively. We’re pleased that our early programming philosophy of “no turfing” through smart scheduling continues to pay dividends in providing an efficient teaching facility. The result has been a rich, rewarding campus 10 years later, and a limitless, exciting future,” states Cotilla.

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ACAI is an award-winning, full-service architecture firm with offices in Broward, Miami-Dade and Palm Beach Counties. Founded in 1985, ACAI’s project-tested architects, engineers and construction professionals consistently deliver innovative, functional, sustainable and cost-effective design solutions. A minority-business enterprise, ACAI has built a longstanding reputation for excellence in the planning and design of universities, schools, local and state government buildings, healthcare facilities, industrial and commercial businesses, and private and public corporations. To learn more, contact Sandra Smerkers, LEED AP, ACAI’s director of marketing, at 954-484-4000, ext. 38, or ssmerkers@acaiworld.com.