Behind the Scenes at the New Physical Sciences Complex

The Physical Sciences Complex is now a reality. The building, which is located at the corner of Regents Drive and Stadium Drive (attached to the Computer and Space Sciences Building), took three years to build at a cost of approximately $118M.

The building includes 160,246 square feet of modern office and laboratory space for the Departments of Physics and Astronomy, the Institute for Physical Sciences and Technology and the Joint Quantum Institute.

The centerpiece of the complex is a curved wall of colored and clear glass that creates a large hole through the middle of the building. At ground floor in the open area there is outdoor seating and a garden. The curved ellipse (truncated cone) shape is narrower at the bottom as a representation of the science of physics, which can focus as narrowly as the nanoscale. It widens and opens at the top to represent the science of astronomy, which studies the known universe and beyond.

The first floor features a snack shop, the Quantum Café, that will be open to the public.

Arranged around the curved walls on the upper floors are offices and common spaces. The hallways are filled with light and bright colors are used throughout. Chalkboard paint is used in many spaces to encourage on-the-fly idea exchanges. Casual modern furniture adds to the feeling of openness and creativity.

Below the surface in the basement and sub-basement are specially designed laboratory spaces. The labs are located underground to minimize vibrations that could affect the sensitive experiments conducted there, and to reduce electromagnetic and radio frequency interference. The space doesn’t feel like it is underground. The ceilings are high to accommodate a variety of equipment and utilities, and spaces are well lit and colorful.
Physical Sciences Complex, continued

In October the television program “Veep” was filmed in and around the building. Elements such as palm trees were added to make the facility look more like a high-tech company’s headquarters. Along one hallway, doors were painted in bright colors with bold, abstract patterns. Instead of reverting to the original plan, the building occupants decided to keep the new look.

The facility includes energy-efficient and sustainable features, including windows, flooring, lighting and plantings. The building includes a green roof that will absorb heat and add oxygen to the air. The building will achieve a LEED rating of at least Silver from the U.S. Green Building Council.

The Physical Sciences Complex will be fully occupied this winter.


- November 22, 2013