

Hough Hall: A New Gold Standard for Business

Gainesville, Fla. – Ground was ceremoniously broken on William R. Hough Hall, new home of the Hough Graduate School of Business, on February 21. As with all new construction projects at UF, Hough Hall has been designed with long-term sustainability in mind, with an emphasis on energy efficiency.

Howie Ferguson, the university's project manager for Hough Hall, says that the facility will achieve a Gold level of LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification by the U.S. Green Building Council. This signifies that its design and construction promotes environmental quality, resource conservation, and sustainable materials and systems. The LEED Green Building Rating System™ is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction, and operation of high performance green buildings. LEED promotes a whole-building approach to sustainability by recognizing performance in five key areas of human and environmental health: Site Planning, Water Management, Energy Management, Material Use, Indoor Air Quality and Innovation & Design Process.

The LEED system has been in place for ten to 12 years, but was adopted for use on all major UF projects beginning in 2001. At that time, the goal was the lowest of four levels of certification, "Basic," but that was later raised to "Silver" and, recently, to "Gold," as UF—and the industry itself—has adapted to the "green" way of designing and constructing buildings. The smallest details are taken into consideration, beginning with site selection. Hough Hall, being constructed on a former parking lot, was awarded points for being built on an already "disturbed" site, thus no additional campus green space was lost. The fact that shower facilities will be available, as well as bike storage, also add points to the tally, as cycling commuters help to reduce local carbon emissions overall. The showers themselves will use water heated by solar panels on the building's west side, according to Ferguson, even no additional points were awarded for this. "We (UF) just felt it was the right thing to do," he says. Likewise, some runoff water from the facility will be captured and used on the landscaping.

UF has redoubled its commitment to the process as energy costs have risen dramatically in the past year. From helping to educate local contractors on green materials—such as carpeting made with recycled materials, Zero VOC (volatile organic compounds) paints, and FSC certified wood—to using local recyclers for all types of waste materials and regional materials in construction, the impact of the effort has a domino effect. Other state universities have looked to UF for guidance in how to create sustainable campuses. And, not only does building to LEED standards help preserve the environment, but it helps UF conserve its budget.

"Even though there's been a \$50,000 to \$100,000 premium for building Hough Hall to these standards," says Ferguson, "we did so not only to reinforce our commitment to sustainability—especially as it stands at UF's front door—but we expect Hough Hall to be roughly 40 percent more energy efficient than the "baseline" model of a similar building. That translates into a \$60,000 annual energy savings. That's the kind of bottom line we expect a school of business, especially, to appreciate."

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