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DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION

march / april 2021

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cover image

The central atrium at the University of New Haven's Bergami Center.

Photo Credit: Peter Aaron/OTTO, courtesy Svigals + Partners

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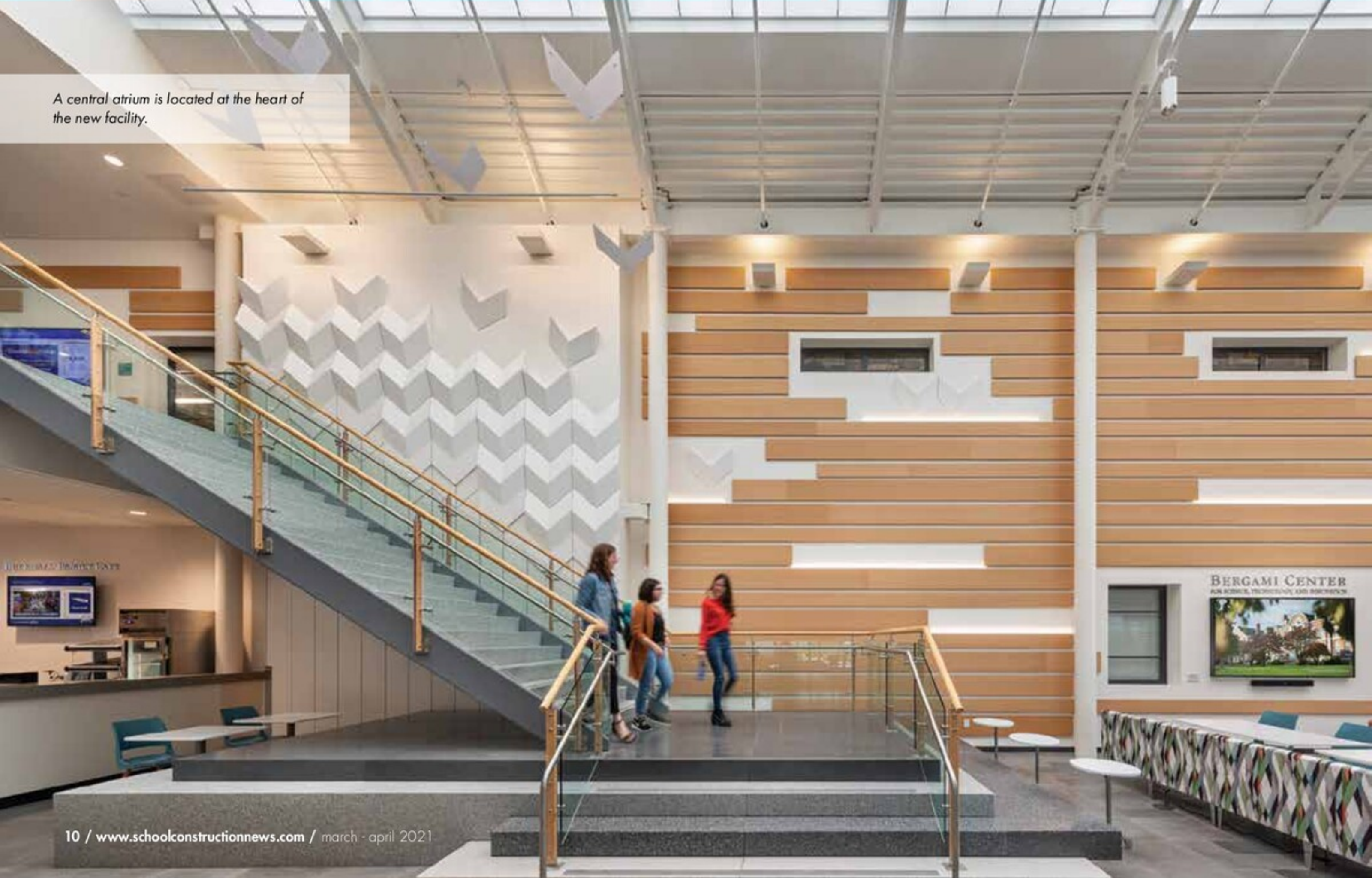
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Thematic artwork installations are found throughout the venue.



Photo Credit (all): Peter Aronov/OTTO, courtesy Svigold + Partners

A central atrium is located at the heart of the new facility.



CREATIVE HUB

University of New Haven Venue Spurs Collaboration

By SCN Staff

GETTING the creative juices flowing may be taken to fresh heights at a brand-new venue at the University of New Haven that will be a Mecca for great minds to gather in Connecticut for many years to come.

Designed by architecture, art and advisory firm Svigals + Partners, nationally known for leading-edge academic facilities, the Bergami Center at the University of New Haven already serves as a hub of activity for interdisciplinary collaboration among students of the sciences.

The facility showcases technology-supported collaborative classrooms, professional video production studios, a makerspace, and an esports classroom and tournament venue. One of the most impressive learning venues to debut in recent years, the Bergami Center embodies the University's dedication to preparing the next generation of leaders and problem solvers in careers of the future.

The building is another impressive by-product of an ongoing collaborative partnership with the University — Svigals + Partners also designed the acclaimed Engineering and Science University Magnet School located on the campus, for example.

"Like previous projects with the university, the design of the Bergami Center emerged from close collaboration between Svigals + Partners and the university's faculty, students, and administration," Svigals + Partners Associate Principal Julia McFadden, AIA, ALEP,

Design Insights

Julia McFadden, AIA, ALEP, associate principal with Svigals + Partners, shared her expert takeaway from the big project in West Haven, Ct.

What do you think is the most unique or outstanding design element of the new Bergami Center?

The focus on creating an abundance of spaces that invite and support interdisciplinary collaboration is the hallmark of the University of New Haven's Bergami Center for Science, Technology & Innovation and a differentiator in its category. The three-story facility is perhaps most notable for the large central atrium where cross-sections of students, staff and faculty can gather in a variety of collaborative studio spaces and huddle zones for informal brainstorming discussions and productive conversations to advance studies, projects and initiatives. The classrooms, makerspace, video studio, esports arena and other academic areas are all state-of-the-art, but the focus on encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration sets the design of Bergami Center apart.

In addition to providing essential support to students' academic pursuits, the hub's faculty-informed design may also promote accelerated achievement post-college. The Bergami Center combines advanced technology with the collaborative modes that produce transformative thinking — giving students the skills and the competitive edge they will need in institutional, corporate and scientific settings.

What was the greatest goal in designing the venue, and how did you approach it?

In addition to creating a dynamic hub where students, faculty, administrators can gather and interact, the Bergami Center was also designed with the goal in mind to create a "heart" for the campus. This was achieved in part by choosing to locate the Bergami Center adjacent to the Buckman Science and Engineering Building — centrally located on the University of New Haven campus. The fusion of these two buildings creates a critical mass of program area and collaborative spaces creating a new, most heavily trafficked facility on the campus, used by STEAM subject majors and non-majors alike. Whether they are involved in academic pursuits or just meeting with friends at the café, students enjoy access to the Bergami Center's extensive program areas and collaborative spaces for an exceptional environment for students to learn, create, and collaborate.

Did the design of the facility reflect any big recent trends in higher-ed architecture?

Institutions of higher education are increasingly focused on supporting the post-graduate pursuits of their students. Designing academic environments like Bergami Center to reflect and evoke real-world work life and experiences represents the leading edge of an emerging trend. Bergami Center also incorporates state-of-the-art technology relevant to multiple STEAM fields — such as professional broadcasting equipment in the video studio, or the computer numeric controlled (CNC) machining in the makerspace lab — representing an increasingly hands-on approach in higher education pedagogy.

It's also worth noting that the innovation hub's esports arena represents another trend in higher education: the emergence of esports as a growing multi-billion-dollar industry, and the parallel rise of esports as a dedicated area of study in college-level business courses. Katelyn Chapin, AIA, an associate with Svigals + Partners and one of the designers on the Bergami Center, recently co-authored a chapter on esports facility design for a college textbook on the business of esports management.

The Bergami Center adjoins the Buckman Science and Engineering Building, creating a heavily trafficked campus hub.



facility of the month

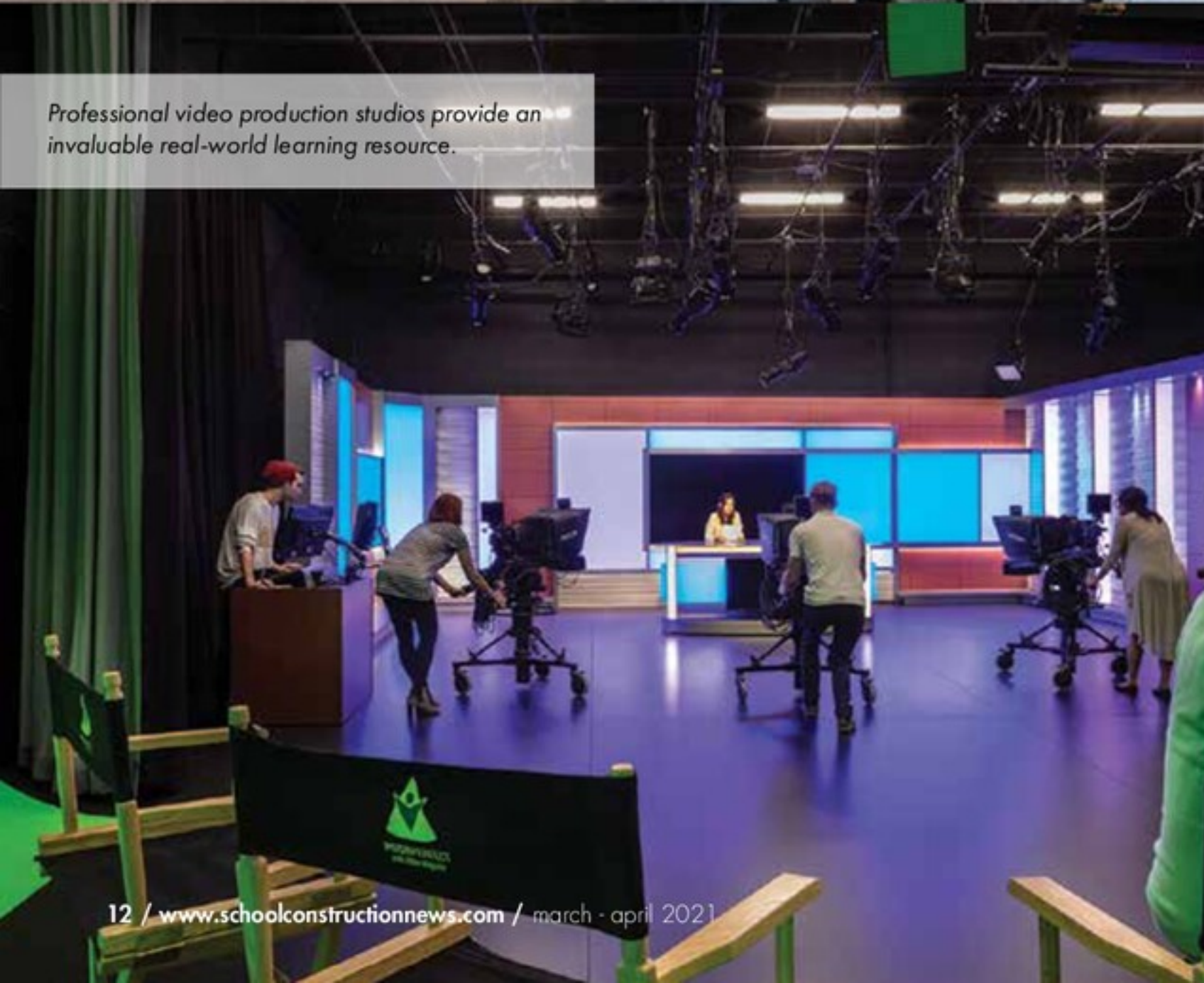
The hive of creativity is even home to a stellar esports area.



A Maker Space is just one of many settings for group learning and collaboration.



Professional video production studios provide an invaluable real-world learning resource.



told SCN, explaining that teamwork played a key role in the overall effort. "The collaboration not only informed goals for the project but also certain mechanics and specifics regarding programming the spaces. We also relied upon our frequent collaborative partner, Consigli Construction, Inc. in the role of construction manager to ensure project delivery on time, even as the final stages of construction were completed during the spring and summer of 2020, when the pandemic created considerable challenges. Charney Architects and Richard Turlington Architects were also valuable partners, integrating the new Bergami Center with the renovations of Buckman Hall and uniquely creating a utility building to provide infrastructure for both projects."

At the heart of the 45,500-square-foot, four-story hive of creativity awaits an artful and airy central atrium where students, faculty and administrators will informally gather for discussions and breakout ideation sessions. The Bergami Center also features forward-thinking collaborative classrooms, engineering and science labs, video production studios, a makerspace, and even an esports training and tournament venue. Thematic artwork pieces throughout the building illustrate the progression taken by ideas and hypotheses to advance from concepts to experiments to solutions.

"We're proud to say that the Bergami Center is one of the finest learning facilities in the country," says University of New Haven Vice President for Advancement Stephen Morin. "The design by Svigals + Partners embodies our institutional commitment to preparing the next generation of leaders and problem solvers."

Situated at the newly created heart of the campus, the evocative and integrated design of the Bergami Center was designed to foster an innovative spirit throughout the University community by inviting students across all majors to collaborate, conceive, and create.

Programming workshops were held with the deans of the four colleges along with administration, department heads, students, and facility staff to determine what spaces would best support a shift to collaborative and interdisciplinary modes of teaching and learning.

Thematic artwork in the atrium, building corridors, and an exterior terrace highlight the interdisciplinary pursuit of science, technology, and innovation. The installations evoke a sense of transformation showcasing the process by which ideas and hypotheses evolve from concepts, to experiments, to solutions.

The final result of all the hard work and collaboration is a unique and dynamic venue that has already been lauded by administration and embraced by its student users.

"We were grateful to hear from University of New Haven president Steven H. Kaplan who said, 'At its core, the Bergami Center embodies our commitment to fostering innovation, cultivating creativity and ingenuity, and educating the next generation of problem solvers.'" Svigals + Partners' McFadden told SCN. "Mr. Kaplan has suggested that the new building strengthens the institutional commitment to preparing students to excel in their careers. To us this is high praise indeed. At the same time, we have noted an enthusiastic use of the spaces by administrators, faculty and students as the University has rolled out a Spring 2021 phased return to campus."

project data

Facility Name: Bergami Center for Science, Technology, and Innovation

Type: Academic/Institutional (Higher Education)

Location: West Haven, Conn.

Construction Budget: \$35 million

Start Date: October 2018

Completion Date: August 2020

Area: 45,500 sf

Owner/Operator: University of New Haven

Architect: Svigals + Partners

Landscape Architect: Richter & Cegan

Interior Designer: Svigals + Partners

Construction Manager: Consigli Construction Co.

Structural Engineer: Michael Horton Associates

MEP Engineer: BVH Integrated Services

Civil Engineer: Westcott & Mapes

Acoustics/AV consulting: Acentech

Food Service Design: McFarland Kistler & Associates

Energy Analysis: Karpman Consulting