

Sage officially good as gold

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Sage Hall is, officially, as good as “Gold.”

The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh’s newest academic building, opened in fall 2011, earned LEED Gold Building Certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. That distinction puts the 191,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art academic center at the top of a short list of buildings in the New North region and state of Wisconsin to reach LEED’s Gold echelon.

“A lot of the credit for this achievement goes to the faculty, staff, students and administration at UW Oshkosh,” said Ian Griffiths, project manager and sustainability coordinator for Berners-Schober Associates, Inc., the project’s Green Bay-based green architectural firm. “Their deep commitment to sustainability on campus and in the classroom, and their intentional direction early on in this project’s life, ensured every partner involved in the Sage project all would strive to dramatically lessen the hall’s impact on the earth in so many ways.”

When it comes to green buildings, Sage Hall is in some rare air. The U.S. Green Building Council's LEED certification registry lists nine building, renovation or expansion projects in the New North region as having achieved Gold status. Sage Hall is the only academic building among those nine. Statewide, 210 projects have achieved some level of LEED certification, according to the registry.

Sage supports the University’s sustainability commitment by maximizing the use of natural light, featuring roof-mounted thermal and parking-lot photovoltaic solar panels, a green roof with low-maintenance plantings, and in-floor radiant heating and cooling systems. Sage’s sustainable features are estimated to save the University \$182,000 annually.

Since it opened in September 2011, Sage Hall has been home to the UW Oshkosh College of Business’s administrators, faculty and program offices, as well as five departments and five programs of the College of Letters and Science.

A diverse team of companies helped UW Oshkosh make the building a reality. They include award-winning general contractor J.P. Cullen and Sons, Inc., architects Berners-Schober and VOA Associates Inc. of Chicago. These partners and an array of regional companies provided the skill and workforce to bring the environmentally friendly and energy efficient building to life. It was estimated that the Sage Hall project generated more than 2,000 construction-related jobs over the duration of its design and construction.

Working in concert, the contractors, architects, engineers, and UW Oshkosh sustainability and facilities teams collaborated to design and develop a center that squeezes every ounce of “green” possible from its position on the campus. Environmental benefits range from abundant sunlight to seasonal storm water. “The solution places labs and classrooms with their windows facing true north, making it easier to

control sunlight, and thus heat gain, in these larger rooms,” a Berners-Schober site synopsis states.

“The faculty offices, smaller rooms with one window, where daylight can more easily be controlled typically face east, south or west, and are equipped with light shelves and integral blinds. Offices and classrooms are located on all four floors; a request from the faculty to encourage interaction with students. This also facilitated the orientation of all program spaces for optimum daylight harvesting. A low lobby running east-west through the building connects to a separate wing of auditorium spaces, to accommodate their loftier volumes. By holding the lecture hall wing to a single story, it offers a view of its vegetated roof containers to the classrooms on the north side, thus fulfilling the building’s mission to educate students on its sustainable features. Solar thermal collectors on the higher roof and radiant heating and cooling in the floor slabs contribute to the building’s energy efficiency. Local, renewable and recycled materials were used wherever possible.”

“We set out to achieve Gold LEED status, and we did it – we reached our goal,” UW Oshkosh Chancellor Richard Wells said. “We are not only proud of this accomplishment, but we are also proud of how our hard work has established a national reputation here for sustainability in all things. We are a community of stewards, helping engrain sustainable materials and methods into everything we build and share, from the buildings we teach and learn in to the programs and curricula we design in the name of enhanced educational quality.”

The Gold LEED status is just the most recent achievement for Sage. In just its first year since opening, the building and the partners that brought it to life have reaped multiple awards for their thoughtful design, construction techniques and methods.

It was honored on May 3, 2012 as one of the “Top Green Projects of 2011” by construction trade magazine *The Daily Reporter*. That same day, the Wisconsin Masonry Alliance (WMA) recognized Sage Hall as with an “Excellence in Masonry Award.”

J. P. Cullen recently earned a 2012 Build Wisconsin Award from the Associated General Contractors (AGC) of Wisconsin in the “General Contractor -- New Construction” category for its work on Sage.

“This project continues to stand as a tremendous example of how, when the public and private sector combine talents, education and the environment are both preserved and enhanced,” said Tom Sonnleitner, vice chancellor of administrative services for UW Oshkosh.

Sage Hall and the collaborative team of public and private partners that helped realize it have helped make 2012 a year of tremendous sustainable strides for UW Oshkosh.

In August, [UW Oshkosh joined 21 colleges and universities from around the United States](#) to earn a spot on *The Princeton Review*’s 2013 Green Honor Roll – the highest such accomplishment for the institution since it began sharing data with and demonstrating its sustainability progress to the company in the last decade. That same month, the Sierra Club and *Sierra Magazine* released their annual “Coolest Schools” rankings, based on the “greenness” of participating universities; [UW Oshkosh was ranked 14th in the nation](#), the highest ranking for UW Oshkosh to date and the highest ranking in the state.

Those two accomplishments followed another Gold-status achievement. In February, the University

became the, at that time, [25th institution in North America and the first in Wisconsin](#) to earn the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education's (AASHE's) Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System (STARS) "Gold" rating.

"Sage Hall is a beautiful embodiment of UW Oshkosh's commitment to addressing the defining challenges of the 21st century," said UW Oshkosh Sustainability Director Brian Kermath. "It thoroughly reflects the University's leadership role among institutions of higher education in actively fashioning a durable and better world."

Learn more:

- [UW Oshkosh dedicates campus' newest academic building in 40 years](#)