

Breathing New Life Into an Aging Academic Facility— Acadia University’s Patterson Hall Renovation

What do you do with a beautiful historical building that doesn’t function well? At Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, the answer is simple—renovate...renovate...renovate!

Patterson Hall—known by faculty, staff and students as “The Old Bio Building”—is a four-storey facility that was built in 1928. The complete renovation has seen it completely stripped down to its structural floors, columns and outside walls and included the removal of all materials containing asbestos.

“It’s a gorgeous building,” says Marcel Falkenham, Director of Facilities Management at Acadia University. “It now meets—and in some cases exceeds—current standards for space, light, energy consumption and air quality.”

This massive renovation project began in 2008 and was completed early summer in time for the 2011 fall semester. Half of the \$4.2-million cost was provided by the Government of Canada’s Knowledge Infrastructure Program (KIP) under Canada’s Economic Action Plan and the other half was provided by the Province of Nova Scotia.

The 40,000-square foot building has new mechanical and electrical systems, new energy-efficient windows, water-conserving fixtures, upgraded insulation, high-speed wireless capability and up-to-date health and safety systems.

“We will certainly be more energy efficient and realize savings from this renovation,” admits Mr. Falkenham. “The building was drafty and did not have adequate heat or air flow. Now we are confident that it meets safety codes. We replaced the sprinkler system and added an additional fire stair; it is truly a smart, healthy building.”



Faculty, students and staff will be greeted with a large commons area on the main floor as they enter the facility, with classrooms and break-out rooms comprising the rest of the first and second floors.

“The top two floors are finished as ‘white box’ space,” explains Mr. Falkenham. “We have put in some walls and heating units, but they will be completed at a future date.”

“The classrooms in Patterson Hall now accommodate over 200 students and are very flexible thanks to the renovations,” Mr. Falkenham states. “We’re a laptop university, and our first-generation classrooms used hard-wired tables that limited flexibility in seating arrangements. With our new high-speed Internet capability, tables and chairs can be placed in whatever configuration is most conducive to study.”

Patterson Hall is adjacent to state-of-the-art research facilities housed in the K.C. Irving Environmental Science Centre and the new Biology Building, and great pains were taken to keep its vintage look intact. “This building is centrally located on campus and a significant facility at Acadia,” he says. “It’s big and easily recognizable and is now like a brand new facility for us, without losing an important part of our history.” The building’s namesake is Reverend Dr. Frederic William Patterson, Acadia’s president from 1923 to 1948.

He goes on to credit Industry Canada with helping the university renovate Patterson Hall. “KIP funding was essential in taking a tired building and bringing it up to standards as a viable part of our campus. It’s a beautiful building that will be well used long into the future thanks to this work.”

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