

River Terrace Education Campus Wins Multiple Awards

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River Terrace Education Campus, a GCS, Inc. project, received an Award of Merit at this month's NAIOP DC|MD 2016 Awards of Excellence for “**Best Institutional Facility**”. The 14th Annual Awards of Excellence Gala, which was held at the Trump International hotel, celebrates the best new projects in the District of Columbia and Montgomery, Prince Georges, and Frederick counties in Maryland.

Additionally, River Terrace Education Campus also was awarded the Grand Prize in the Fall 2016 edition of LEARNING BY DESIGN. The much-anticipated edition showcased the nation's best education design and construction projects ranging from pre-k to college/university facilities. The jury commented about the project that “the conversion of a parking lot to an exterior courtyard as a very innovative solution. The classroom organization around it makes every classroom connected to the exterior. Overall a beautiful addition that reflects the needs of the learners.”

The project consisted of the 40,000 SF modernization and 37,700 SF expansion of the River Terrace Education Campus. The design-build project, which now serves up to 160 students ages 3 through 21 with exceptional needs and profound intellectual disabilities, consolidated the special education programs from Sharpe Health School and Mamie D. Lee School.

The new state-of-the-art facility is a zero barrier environment designed and constructed with the needs of its occupants and their helpers of foremost consideration. Light harvesting, Bluetooth connectivity to hearing devices, soft floors, color selection, furniture, accessibility, and special-equipped amenities are standard throughout the new campus. All the materials, color selections, furniture, and fixtures were selected with specific goals and educational philosophy in mind. The building layout creates a mixture of public and private areas that serve to improve and assist in the education of the school's occupants; these spaces are used as a tool as much as traditional classroom fixtures.

The campus includes typical education facilities (classrooms, media center, cafeteria, and gymnasium) as well as specialized amenities, including health suites, an occupational therapy suite with a therapy pool, music, art, and sensory rooms, and assisted living quarters where students learn how to live independently.

The Workforce Development Center, housed in the new portion of the campus, offers specialized training to older students in the fields of hospitality administration, health assistance, and horticulture. Facilities for the Development Center include a new horticulture center with outdoor gardens and green house, as well as mock hotel facilities such as mail rooms, laundry facilities, and registration desks. Students from the Workforce Development Center practice their skills both at school and in the workforce through partnerships with several large local corporations.

Kerric Baird, Executive Vice President of GCS, Inc., states, "It was a privilege to be a part of the River Terrace project team. The unique construction elements implemented will help the DC education community for years to come."

Congratulations to the entire project team on the awards, including DGS, GCS, Inc., and project architects Bryant Mitchell Architects and Fanning Howey.

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