

October 2007

## A College Consolidation

*Buildings Interiors® Citation of Excellence: Behrakis Student Center/One-Stop, Northern Essex Community College, Haverhill, MA*

Before the completion of the Behrakis Student Center/One-Stop, student support services were scattered throughout the Haverhill, MA, campus of Northern Essex Community College. As the student population changed over the years and more students elected to work full time while earning their degrees, the college recognized that students would be able to make the most of their time spent on campus if the various student services were located in a single location.

The solution was to open the Behrakis Student Center/One-Stop, which houses the Learning Accommodations Center, the Student Assessment Center, the Enrollment Management Offices, the Student Processing Center, the Career Planning and Advising Center, conference rooms, "smart" presentation rooms, the bookstore, and a student lounge. The new One-Stop is a vibrant, inviting place for students, faculty, and staff to gather. With student services located under one roof, students can now have all of their supporting needs met in one location in the shortest amount of time possible.

Instead of constructing a new building, the decision was made to maximize existing space by renovating the underutilized Student Union building and cafeteria. The Student Union was originally used as a place to relax between classes by students who remained on campus all day. Due to its wide floor plate and low concrete waffle slab ceilings, the institutional, 2-story concrete building lacked natural light, felt cramped, and simply needed to be updated to streamline and shorten the time spent on campus by students. The renovation was made possible by private funding from the Behrakis family in honor of Ourania Behrakis, a Northern Essex Community College Trustee member and longtime supporter, while the Commonwealth of Massachusetts owns the existing building.

The transformation was thorough. Both floors were completely gutted. As part of the updated layout, interior windows and open partitions create a feeling of spaciousness and allow natural light to flow into the building. Light passing through an existing skylight now illuminates the Career Planning and Advising Center. Sidelights, energy-efficient lighting fixtures, and new ceiling tiles were also installed. The abundance of natural light, in combination with the energy-efficient lighting fixtures, helps keep costs down and brings new vibrancy to the interior of the building. In addition, linoleum flooring was installed throughout the building. Linoleum was chosen for its ability to withstand high traffic and for its low maintenance requirements. The renovation included the addition of "smart" technology. Students can work from computer stations located in the Student Lounge, and conference and presentation rooms with wireless technology are now available.

Because of the decision to renovate the existing building, the Student Union and cafeteria had to remain functional during the construction process. To ensure minimal disruption, the project team placed a high emphasis on planning and coordination. The team rose to the challenge: The bookstore and cafeteria were accessible throughout the entire construction process, and the renovation was completed within the projected budget and timeframe. The One-Stop has received positive reviews from all users.

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### Judges' Comments

"A one-stop shop: a student's dream! Long gone is the notion that we should spend our time walking between distant facilities in a futile task of accomplishing simple duties. This community college has realized that a student's time is precious and that time constraints imposed by the college's aging facilities should be corrected. The solution is ... well thought out and executed. The choice of materials and colors reflects the vibrancy students have come to expect."



ALEX BEATTY PHOTOGRAPHY



**Citation of Excellence:**  
Behrakis Student Center/One-Stop,  
Northern Essex Community College,  
Haverhill, MA

**Submitting Company:**  
Luna Design Group, Lynnfield, MA

**Project Team:** (not all-inclusive)  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts, owner;  
Northern Essex Community College, user  
agency; Luna Design Group,  
architect/designer/planner; Crossfield  
Engineering, MEP/fire protection  
engineer; Whiteway Construction,  
contractor.

**Project Specifics:**  
Building type/use: educational

Square footage: 44,000 square feet

Project cost: \$3 million

Project completion: March 2006

**Products Used:** (not all-inclusive)  
Building Controls: Johnson Controls  
Carpet: Milliken Ceilings: Armstrong  
Doors: VT Industries Electrical: AFC  
Cable Systems Inc. Flooring: Armstrong  
Hardware: Corbin Russwin; Schlage; Von  
Duprin Lighting: Delray Lighting; Focal  
Point; Litecontrol; Lithonia Lighting;  
Winona Lighting; Zumtobel Staff Paint: ICI  
Paints Plumbing/Washrooms: Eljer Inc.;