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Desert Flower

A new way of thinking about student services takes root at the Glendale campus of Maricopa Community College in Phoenix, with a new student services building designed by Richärd & Bauer

By Jennifer Thiele Busch
Photography by Robert Reck.



Maricopa Community College's one-stop-shopping approach to student services is embodied in the new center at its Glendale campus (above). Each building on the original 1965 campus incorporated a stained glass entry door; Richärd & Bauer has reinterpreted this detail here (opposite) as colored glass pivot doors that open onto a courtyard used for overflow space.

The statistics are staggering: The population of the Phoenix metropolitan area has increased by 45.3 percent since 1990, and in 2003 the area constitutes 475 sq. mi. and growing. Fortunately the administrators of Maricopa Community College, which serves the greater Phoenix area, saw the writing on the wall nearly 20 years ago. In 1984, it won a \$380-million bond issue to finance the expansion of the college's existing campuses, as well as the addition of new campus locations throughout

Maricopa County—an area roughly the size of the state of New Hampshire. Today, Phoenix is the seventh largest city in the United States, and Maricopa County College is the largest two-year community college in the nation, serving 250,000 students across 10 campuses.

Richärd & Bauer, a dynamic, young Phoenix design firm founded by James Richärd, AIA, and Kelly Bauer, IIDA, in 1996, has consistently served the Glendale campus of Maricopa Community College as design architect and interior designer for several campus improvements, including a library renovation, and new science, mathematics, and student services buildings. Their influence has led the college down a new stylistic path, which reinterprets the campus' traditional design vocabulary in a Modernist way that favors the

exploration of new materials and the seamless integration of indoor and outdoor space.

According to Dr. Joyce Elsner, who was dean of administrative services at the Glendale campus during the design and construction of the new student services center, this 16,000-sq. ft. building was intended to consolidate such functions as registration, financial aid, transfer services, advisement, records, and the bursar's office under one roof for a more efficient approach to student services. "Niches were carved out here and there as the need for services expanded," says Elsner. "These functions were all dispersed, making it a challenge for students just to get registered. Unfortunately, however, our dream for a one-stop shop far exceeded our budget."

Richärd and Bauer acknowledge that the ideal building to suit the client's aggressive program was double the cost that the college had allocated. It was also nearly double the size. "They had need for a much more extensive facility than they could actually afford," says Richärd. Nevertheless, says Elsner, the administration was not willing to compromise on its vision. The College secured additional loan money, which still wasn't enough. The rest of the solution rested on Richärd & Bauer's creative shoulders.

Undaunted, the designers capitalized on Arizona's hospitable year-round climate by capturing the outdoors as usable functional space for peak registration periods. "Creating outdoor spaces is part of our design approach and style," says Bauer, who is planning to head back to school for a supplemental degree in landscape design. "Protection from the sun becomes part of the architecture." As a result, the tilt slab concrete building featuring exposed structural steel and concrete floors was also graced with large pivot doors that open to an adjacent courtyard where shading, seating, and a cooling fountain provide



an area for year-round use. In addition, the north wall of the building is all glass to maximize the connection between interior and exterior.

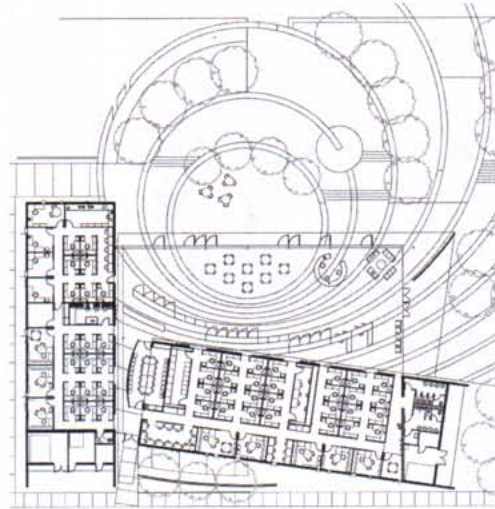
The student services center—like the three previous projects Richárd & Bauer designed for the Glendale campus—borrows certain elements from the school's original 1965 architecture, but also represents a bold stylistic departure from those earlier buildings. "The original design vocabulary included battered concrete solid mass buildings contrasted against a flower column colonnade," says Richárd. "The student services building reflects that battered mass with sloped concrete walls, while the open steel structure reflects the columns." Perhaps more apparent to the casual observer is the inspired reuse of stained glass as a focal design element. "On the original campus, all the main entries have a single, stained glass door," says Bauer. "Our modern interpretation of that idea is the colored glass pivot doors that open to the outdoor space."

"The aesthetic is wonderful," notes Elsner. "The building takes the architecture of the past and modernizes it without losing the flavor of the old campus." For better or for worse, its functionality also crosses old with new. Though the flexible interiors include self-directing registration terminals and centrally located triage points, and support a more efficient, integrated model for student services, the building also confirms the fact that change does not come easily. Some administrators who had comfortably carved out their little fiefdoms in their old locations were apparently shocked by the emphasis on multi-tasking in the new space, says Richárd. Elsner adds, "When you bring new into a traditional environment, people either love it or hate it."

And one anticipated advantage of the new building has definitely not come to fruition. "As much as we try to get rid of lines, our clientele is very high touch," admits Elsner, adding that the outdoor overflow space has been more in demand than originally thought. "In the end, I think we forced the philosophy too hard, by putting too many functions under one roof," she says. But what is college for, if not to live and learn? ☐



Project Summary



Who

Project: New Enrollment Center, Glendale Community College. **Client:** Glendale Community College. **Architect:** Richard + Bauer Architecture; James Richard AIA, principal architect; Stephen Kennedy, AIA, project architect; Andy Timberg, staff architect. **Interior designer:** Richard + Bauer Architecture; Kelly Bauer, IIDA, project manager and interior designer; Julie Hutchison, staff designer. **Structural engineer:** Caruso Turley Scott. **Mechanical/electrical engineer:** Energy Systems Design. **General contractor:** Layton SW. **Construction administrator:** Erik Koss, & Stephen Kennedy Construction Administration. **Lighting designer:** Richard + Bauer, Energy Systems Design. **Furniture dealer:** Facilitex, USBI, Emerlings. **Photographer:** Robert Reck.

What

Paint: Frazee. **Laminate/solid surface:** Corian. **Dry wall:** USG. **Carpet/carpet tile:** Lees Carpet. **Carpet fiber:** Dupont Antron Nylon. **Carpet backing:** Unibond Backing System. **Ceiling:** Epic Metals. **Lighting:** Insight, Alfa Lighting, Columbia Lighting. **Doors:** Weyerhaeuser. **Door hardware:** Bloomcraft, Yale & LCN. **Glass:** PPG. **Casework:** Custom by Casework Technologies. **Steel pivot doors:** Custom by Commercial Door & Hardware. **Translucent acrylic panels:** Custom by Knoll. **Glass wall:** Custom by Demers Glass. **Students' desks/seating:** Brandrud. **Administrative seating:** Reimers. **Lounge seating:** Loewenstein. **Seating upholstery:** The Designtex Group. **Office shelving, files:** Haworth. **Architectural woodworking:** Casework Technologies. **Cabinetmaking:** Euro-Design Systems. **Planters, accessories:** The Plant People. **Signage:** ASI. **Building management system:** Johnson Controls.

Technologically integrated service desks in natural maple are located for easy access from a central triage point to help speed students through the registration process (opposite). The new student services center also embodies a more Modernist approach to architecture at the school (above).

Where

Location: Glendale, AZ. **Total floor area:** 16,659 sq. ft. **No. of floors:** 1. **Student capacity:** 520. **Cost/sq. ft.:** \$165.