

Home to School of Architecture, Richardson Memorial Hall reopens after major expansion and renovation

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Faculty and students — both graduate and undergraduate — in the Architecture Program work in one of the fourth floor studios in Richardson Memorial Hall. The building has six large studio spaces for architecture, design, historic preservation and real estate development studio-based courses. (Photo by Kenny Lass)

Richardson Memorial Hall, one of the oldest buildings on Tulane University's uptown campus and home to the School of Architecture since 1968, has been given a new life — reopening this week to students, faculty and staff after a four-year renovation and expansion.

“This spectacular modern version of a historic building promises to bring our acclaimed School of Architecture to the next level of design education with inspiring open spaces that foster collaboration between students and faculty,” Tulane President Michael A. Fitts said. “By preserving its architectural legacy while enhancing its facilities, we are ensuring that Richardson Memorial Hall continues to provide our students with the resources they need to shape the future of the built environment.”

Originally constructed to house the Tulane School of Medicine, Richardson Memorial was built in 1908 in the Richardsonian Romanesque style. With its brick and limestone façade, the five-story, 45,000-square-foot structure has undergone improvements over the years but nowhere near the transformative magnitude of the latest project, which reimagines all of the building’s spaces and includes around 17,000 square feet of additions to the back of the building.

The new Richardson Memorial Hall features studios, review spaces, classrooms, a gallery, offices and meeting rooms. Architecture students and faculty participated in the design of the new building by proposing design solutions and expressing their priorities.

The first floor of the new design features expanded space for the school’s Fabrication Labs, renovated faculty and staff offices, and a graduate student lounge. The second floor’s original spacious lobby with a grand Y-shaped staircase has been fully restored, and the school’s main lecture hall on the second floor has been updated for major events, invited speakers and large gatherings.

Additionally, the school now has its first-ever set of review rooms and a dedicated gallery on the second floor for exhibitions to showcase both student and faculty work throughout the year. The second through fifth floors have six renovated large studio rooms and also include three newly built seminar rooms that can also function as pin-up spaces for reviews, a critical pedagogical tool used across the school’s academic programs in architecture, design, real estate development, historic preservation, sustainable urbanism, landscape architecture and social innovation.

“The new building will be an absolute game changer in terms of quality of the experience and in attracting top-caliber students,” said Iñaki Alday, dean of the School of Architecture. “We are especially grateful for the support of Tulane

University and of our donors, whose generosity will enhance the top-notch education our students are already receiving. They are extremely generous and extremely committed.”

Trapolin-Peer Architects of New Orleans led the project, with Broadmoor Construction serving as the builders. In the design of the building, one of the main objectives was to blend historic preservation with modern sustainability practices.

“This project does a great job of preserving what was worth preserving, while bringing it into the 21st century,” said Byron Mouton, Lacey Senior Professor of Practice and the faculty liaison on the project. “It’s a project that lets the old and new co-exist.”

The building is on track to be LEED certified at the silver level, which means the construction has met certain standards related to energy and water efficiency, material selection, indoor environmental quality and more. LEED, or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, is the world’s most widely used green building rating system.

“Students are excited to be part of this milestone in the Tulane School of Architecture story,” said architecture student Alexa Trapani, who serves as president of the school’s student government body and the Tulane chapter of the American Institute of Architecture Students.

“The renovation offers a space for students to finally feel united again,” Trapani said. “It will be invaluable to be in one collective space where students can feel like they are a part of all the exciting things happening within the school.”

With the renovation complete, the school has planned several celebrations, including a “Welcome Home” event for current students, faculty and staff on March 19, a building dedication on April 24 and a fundraiser and awards gala the night of April 24.

The school also plans to make a major announcement regarding its name in the near future. “The current name falls short of who we are,” Alday said. “We are more than architecture. We cover the entire built environment.”



School of Architecture students, faculty and staff gather outside the newly renovated Richardson Memorial Hall. (Photo by Kenny Lass)



Patti Dunn, professor of practice in the Design Program, prepares a sewing machine for students studying textile design and construction in the second floor studio at Richardson Memorial Hall. (Photo by Kenny Lass)

Jesse Toohey, Fabrication Labs manager, and Nick Perrin, professor of practice in the Design Program, collaborate inside the expanded Fabrication Labs' Woodshop at Richardson Memorial Hall. With an addition built on the back of the building, the renovation features significantly more space and equipment for fabrication, including large format printing, 3D resin printers, laser cutters and the Woodshop. (Photo by Kenny Lass)