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D.F. Pray completes Bristol Comm. College's 6,800 s/f fast-track project

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D.F. Pray General Contractors has completed the extraordinarily fast-track 6,800 s/f reconstruction project at Bristol Community College's (BCC) eHealth campus at 800 Purchase St.

D.F. Pray served as the project's design/build general contractor, teaming with Higher Education Partners, who collaborated with BCC in the planning and construction of the facility. J.M. Booth & Associates provided architectural services.

The project scope entailed complete demolition and reconstruction of the second floor of the BCC facility, located in the Cherry & Webb building, which was constructed in 1905. Pray began demolition work the second week of July and construction commenced in early August. The contractor provided considerable value engineering services throughout the project in order to address structural design issues within the 90-year old building. They achieved substantial completion by August 28, and BCC took occupancy in the first week of September.

D.F. Pray's project management team of senior project executive Ken Spader, project manager John Fontana, and project supervisor Steve DeVellis supervised a cadre of Massachusetts-based subcontractors, including: Averill Electric, Acoustek, Inc., Guido's Plate Glass, E. A. Marchant, and E Floors.

Within the 5½-week construction schedule, D.F. Pray provided build-out of laboratory and training facilities for BCC's nursing and pharmacy programs. The BCC Health Services campus now houses a phlebotomy lab, a "SIM" Lab-simulated hospital setting, a nursing lab, and a pharmacy lab for pharmacy tech students. The SIM lab has highly sophisticated "robotic patients" that are able to communicate with nursing students concerning their medical condition.

D.F. Pray supervised a field crew of 15 to 30 skilled trade workers throughout the project. To meet BCC project schedule requirements, work was performed in double shifts - day and night, six days each week.

Commenting on the demands of the project, Spader said, "D.F. Pray was able to meet the aggressive project schedule thanks to the cooperative effort of all project team members. It required close coordination with Higher Education Partners, which provided skillful planning to ensure quality execution of the project. The efforts of our dedicated and skilled team of subcontractors, coupled with timely review, inspection, and support of the project from the City of New Bedford's Building Commissioner, enabled us to meet BCC's scheduling requirements." The new facility was ready for the start of the current academic year.

DeVellis said, "The spirit of cooperation was tremendous. There is co-dependency on each of the trades in order to achieve a quality project, especially one with a close and critical deadline.

Throughout the project, D.F. Pray had close interaction with the New Bedford Building Department,

which performed timely inspections to ensure the project timelines were met. D.F. Pray has a well-established relationship with the city of New Bedford, having completed the BCC Health Campus third floor renovation project earlier this year and numerous expansion projects for Titleist at Ball Plant 3 in the New Bedford Industrial Park.

In a recent interview, BCC director of E-Health Services division, Karen Varieur, spoke of D.F. Pray's workmanship and the construction firm's ability to meet BCC's requirements for the state-of-the-art nurse training lab and pharm-tech lab. "I am very impressed with D.F. Pray, as they have met our every need. Their work and input started in our first meeting with the architect and it continued through all aspects of the project. Accreditation requirements in educational health services are very specific and considerable detail is required within the build-out of the facility. The D.F. Pray management team was very informed on all technical details that were required. For instance, their team provided sophisticated, high-end wiring for the phlebotomy lab and also met specific, stringent nursing lab requirements."

Speaking of the project timeline, Varieur said, "They were provided a very short window, as the project was expected to start in April, but they were not able to actually begin until the second week of August. Their project management was phenomenal. D.F. Pray was able to gain approvals in New Bedford expeditiously, and they handled the project in a very professional manner. They responded to all our requests, faster than what was anticipated.

Concerning having the classrooms available for the current academic year, Varieur said, "Classroom space was ready for start of the academic year, just after Labor Day. D.F. Pray even put up a temporary wall between the classrooms and the lab to accommodate our needs, while awaiting delivery of the electronic wall system. Their quality of workmanship is outstanding. And, they have been efficient in addressing punch-list items. I just can't say enough about them."

Speaking of a specific aspect of the project where an unbeknown structural beam issue arose, she said, "They literally ran into a brick wall in the century-old Cherry & Webb building, as you don't know what's behind walls until you get into them...but, they were able to overcome those difficulties and provide an ideal, viable solution."

Director Varieur said, "D.F. Pray also provided the build-out of the classrooms on the third floor, a project which they started in late September 2011, and were able to deliver for BCC to meet a January 2012 classroom opening."

Enrollment in the BCC Health Services nursing, pharmacy-tech, and phlebotomy programs at the New Bedford campus is expected to reach upwards of 200 to 300 students in the first year of the program. "Since, this facility and program is just now open for first-year nursing students, we expect the program will expand exponentially," Varieur said.

On the subject of BCC's revitalization and its impact on New Bedford, she said, "We are proud that BCC has been able to help breathe new life into the City of New Bedford. When BCC opened the New Bedford campus at the former Star Store building about 10 years ago, there were about 400 students and that has expanded to approximately 2,000. It has led to an influx of restaurants, coffee shops, and art galleries in the downtown area frequented by our students and faculty, which is a plus for New Bedford. We're confident BCC will have a continued positive effect on the City's future growth and development. We appreciate the efforts the City has undertaken in helping us build a state-of-the-art health services facility in a very timely manner." 800 Purchase Street - New Bedford, MA