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Hampshire College to build new R. W. Kern Center to the most rigorous environmental design standards

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Hampshire College will build its new R. W. Kern Center according to the most rigorous environmental design standards in the world. The building will create its own energy, treat its own waste, and meet all sustainability requirements of the Living Building Challenge. President Jonathan Lash describes the 15,000 s/f, multifunctional Center as "a physical embodiment of the Hampshire College community's values, and a teaching tool in and of itself." It will serve as an educational laboratory showcasing Hampshire's commitment to addressing sustainability issues.

A groundbreaking ceremony will be held November 14 at 3:30 p.m. Construction of the project is supported by a lead gift from the Kern family, and the R. W. Kern Center is scheduled to open in 2016.

President Lash said: "The R. W. Kern Center provides a model for addressing global challenges and a symbol of the positive change possible in how we approach built environments. We deeply appreciate the generosity of the Kern family in making this innovative structure possible."

The R. W. Kern Center will be the natural point of entry into the Hampshire College campus in the future. Road construction was completed over the summer to reroute carbon-emission vehicles toward the sides of campus and away from its center, an area that has been converted into wildflower-filled meadowlands.

The R. W. Kern Center will provide new classrooms and meeting spaces, and contain exhibit areas for display of work by students and faculty, a bookstore, and a café. It will house the admissions office and be the place where prospective students, their families, and other visitors to campus come in immediate contact with the people, work, and creativity of the Hampshire community.

The process used to determine the "living" building design and what functions would be housed in the R. W. Kern Center also reflected the values of the Hampshire community, with open meetings and input sought from all on campus. Students were an important part of discussions and planning.

Architects for the project are Bruner/Cott & Associates of Boston. The two-story R. W. Kern Center will be constructed of locally sourced materials, with a 100kW photovoltaic array atop the roof, and have triple-glazed windows and rainwater collection systems. The contractor for the project is Wright Builders, Inc., of Northampton, Mass.; principal Jonathan Wright is a Hampshire College alumnus.

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