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Shawmut Design and Construction updates Northeastern Univ. robotics lab

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Boston, MA Shawmut Design and Construction completed the conversion and renovation of an existing lab into the new robotics lab at Northeastern University. The facility is located on the fourth floor of Northeastern's Richards Hall at 330 Huntington Ave.

Working with architectural firm Linea 5, Shawmut renovated the 3,000 s/f space with brand new manufacturing and prototyping rooms. The factory-like space features an open floor plan and exposed, Unistrut-style ceiling with an overhead utility carrier system with sliding trolleys that allows robots to be vertically supported during experiments such as walking testing.

In keeping with Northeastern's College of Engineering's "Science on Display" theme, the team installed storefront windows and high-efficiency LED lighting to allow visitors to better view the testing and display area in the main lab. The team also infused the space with an industrial aesthetic by including a polished concrete floor, stainless steel sink counters, and affixing wood butcher block tops to all casework and mobile tables.

"The driving force behind this renovation was to provide lab and workshop space that better allows students in Northeastern's robotics department to complete and showcase their hard work," said Kevin Sullivan, vice president at Shawmut Design and Construction. "It was a rewarding experience for our team to complete this technical project on a quick turnaround, and to contribute to the success of such a prestigious program."

The renovation was a fast-tracked project, kicking off in July with a completion deadline of September, in time for the new academic year. Meeting the pressing deadline was extra challenging given the many technical aspects of the project. In addition to the ceiling updates and storefront-style viewing corridor, the team installed mobile benches and tool cabinets, a manufacturing facility for polymer casting, a prototyping room to house shop equipment, a mechanical room for the dedicated compressed air system, and a storage room. Accommodating the lab's power needs was also a main focus for the team, which they resolved by hanging overhead cord reels from an existing waffle concrete slab, allowing for the space to remain flexible and configurable.

Shawmut's completion of Northeastern's robotics lab represents the latest in the firm's extensive academic work in the Boston area. Other recent projects for Shawmut's academic division include Harvard University's Life Lab, Boston University's Myles Standish Hall, Simmons College's Daly

Field, and Boston College's residence hall at 2000 Commonwealth Ave.

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