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Gilbane building Wentworth Institute of Technology's 75,000 s/f "living learning lab" for students

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Boston, MA Gilbane Building Company is breaking new ground in educating the next generation of construction innovators by leveraging its construction of Wentworth Institute of Technology's newest academic building as a "living learning laboratory" for students.

The 75,000 s/f building represents Wentworth's first new academic facility in 45 years. Gilbane has partnered with university faculty to form a hands-on educational program around its design and construction, including bi-weekly site tours, an evening lecture series focused on various construction and design disciplines, and guest lectures in the classroom. To date, Wentworth students have accrued more than 4,500 learning hours, the equivalent of almost 2.5 years of full-time curriculum for one student.

"Gilbane's willingness to share their time and expertise to connect real-world situations from this building's construction to our classroom curriculum has added a new dimension to student learning," said Jack Duggan, chair of the Department of Civil Engineering and Technology.

Duggan cites geotechnical engineering students speaking directly with environmental engineers about how they addressed soil management at the construction site as one example.

"Those personal interactions help our students better understand how to approach complex issues," said Duggan, "while also visualizing where their own careers will take them in years to come."

All elements of this hands-on learning program, such as the Evening Lecture Series and classroom presentations, are being documented and recorded to be used by Wentworth for years to come. Gilbane is partnering with project architect Leers Weinzapfel Architects and RSC Structural Engineers on the lectures, which examine topics including LEAN construction, construction risk management, and environmental engineering.

"Gilbane is committed to fostering careers in the construction industry. Using the development of this building as a living laboratory is a great way to bring classroom education to life," said Neil Benner, Gilbane's project executive. "These Wentworth students bring tremendous energy and commitment to their studies and it's gratifying to know that this building will serve as a testament to the foundation of what will no doubt be long and successful careers."

The new academic building will house classroom, gallery, lecture, and meeting spaces. Academic programs will include Wentworth's new biological engineering program; biomedical and civil engineering programs; science and manufacturing laboratories; and teaching/learning spaces to promote a collaborative environment. Additionally, the facility will serve as the home for Wentworth's Innovation Center, which fosters collaboration among students and alumni, community members, and industry leaders.

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