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Leers Weinzapfel Associates receives AIA COTE Top Ten Award

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Amherst, MA Leers Weinzapfel Associates receives AIA COTE Top Ten Award for their work on the John W. Olver Design Building at the University of Massachusetts. Conferred by the AIA Committee on the Environment, the COTE Top Ten Awards is the industry's best-known award program for sustainable design excellence. Each year, ten innovative projects are recognized for their integration of design excellence with environmental performance.

Bringing together the previously dispersed departments of Landscape Architecture, Architecture, and Building Technology programs, the John W. Olver Design Building is a dynamic space of exchange, collaboration, and experiment, celebrating a shared commitment to sustainability. The first, and at the time, the largest, cross-laminated timber (CLT) academic structure in the U.S., the LEED Gold project demonstrates emerging technologies of mass timber as a renewable construction resource with economic and aesthetic advantages.

The building's integrated sustainability maximizes passive design impact, and engineering solutions minimize its operational energy use. Its timber structure reduces embodied energy, and the building envelope is highly-efficient, with mechanical equipment zoned for maximum efficacy. Radiant

flooring and chilled beams also provide savings. Glazing and skylights maximize interior daylight, reducing the need for artificial lighting. Water management is integrated into the landscape design, modeling the role of water in the native ecosystem and dramatically reducing stormwater runoff.

The building's pivotal campus site brings students and faculty together in its well-lit "commons" for organized and informal collaboration. Studio and maker spaces surround this area, and the functioning ecosystem of the building's landscape and roof garden provide instructive outdoor classrooms.

"The Olver Design Building, a pioneer in CLT academic structures realized due to faculty advocacy, is both a learning environment and a teaching tool," said Leers Weinzapfel principal Andrea Leers. "Its highly innovative engineered structure makes it an example for the sustainable use of wood and builds on the leading-edge research of the university's Building Construction Technology program."

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