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Gilbane Building Co. completes University of Rhode Island Ocean Science and Exploration Center

July 08, 2009 - Rhode Island

Construction of the University of Rhode Island's \$15 million Ocean Science and Exploration Center and the Pell Marine Science Library was recently completed by Gilbane Building Company. The facility will enable the University to remain one of the nation's most prestigious centers of oceanographic research, exploration and education.

"This new facility will become the heart of the Graduate School of Oceanography, a place that will nurture and strengthen interactions between faculty and students," said David Farmer, dean of the Graduate School of Oceanography. "We have created a building that evokes both a physical and intellectual center for the campus while accommodating the growing information resources necessary to sustain our research and educational programs in the 21st century."

The centerpiece of the 41,000 s/f facility is the Inner Space Center, which will use a satellite system and Internet2 to make it possible for URI scientists and students to participate in ocean-going research expeditions without leaving campus. The Center will enable scientists ashore to "step aboard" research ships around the world as they use advanced undersea vehicles developed by the Office of Naval Research and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to explore uncharted regions of the world.

The Inner Space Center will also be linked with other research institutions around the country, making it possible for researchers to interact in real-time with ships at sea, as well as to classrooms in Rhode Island and elsewhere, providing schoolchildren with unprecedented access to science as it happens through the Immersion Learning program.

"This new building is the culmination of a dream I first envisioned 28 years ago to use 'telepresence' technology to not only make it possible for scientists all around the world to participate in live undersea exploration, but also to use the excitement of exploration to motivate the next generation of explorers to prepare them for the continuation of this adventure," said Robert Ballard, URI professor of oceanography, director of the Institute for Archaeological Oceanography, and president of the Institute for Exploration at Mystic Aquarium.

The building is expected to earn LEED certification (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) from the U.S. Green Building Council for its sustainable design and construction. The facility was designed by Burt, Hill of Boston.

The Ocean Science and Exploration Center also houses office and laboratory space, a central computing facility, administrative offices, and a new campus gathering place. Offices for NOAA personnel, the Institute for Exploration and the Ocean Exploration Trust are also located in the building.

The top floor of the Center houses the expanded Pell Marine Science Library, one of the nation's most important collections of oceanographic information. Established in 1968, the library's previous

site was at capacity and in need of renovation to protect its collections. The new library provides additional space for materials as well as an electronic classroom, a map room and a wireless computer network.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540