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Thursday, Feb. 10, 2011

SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP STUDIES BUILDING WINS COVETED DESIGN-BUILD AWARD

MANHATTAN -- The Kansas State University School of Leadership Studies building is barely a year old, but that's all the time it took to be named Project of the Year by the Design-Build Institute of America/Mid-America Region, or DBIA-MAR.

At a recent ceremony in Overland Park, the School of Leadership Studies facility placed first in the institutional building category and went on to sweep the rest of the categories to win Project of the Year. The Opus Group, Kansas City, Mo., designed and constructed the building, which was completed in December 2009.

"We were very impressed by the teaming arrangement and what the clients set out to do with this particular building, and the design-build process allowed them to meet the goals that they had set for the School of Leadership Studies," said Oretta Smith, executive director of the DBIA-MAR. "They saved time and they saved money -- all of the things that the design-build process does well."

Design-build is a collaborative and flexible effort where the clients, designers, engineers and contractors work together through each stage of the development to ensure an optimal finished product. It's quicker than the traditional method of designing the building before breaking ground, which typically undergoes a lot of back-and-forth between the architects, contractors and clients.

The School of Leadership Studies building, which recently won its Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED, gold certification, was finished three to six months earlier than it would have been without the design-build approach.

"From an architect's standpoint, design-build is more efficient because I get answers about the construction while I'm designing, as opposed to drawing it all and then finding out there may be a better or different way to build it by the contractor at a later stage in the process," said Gary Schuberth, the Opus architect who designed the building.

The Project of the Year award is not given out every year, Smith said. But the judges thought that the School of Leadership Studies was worthy of the honor because it:

- * Presented its design-build story well.
- * Showed great innovation in numerous aspects.
- * Promoted and displayed best practices in design-build delivery, teaming and collaboration.
- * Created a timeless, warm and inviting home for the program.
- * Used materials and finishes that blended with surrounding buildings, yet made its own leadership statement on campus.
- * Provided a variety of learning spaces that optimized teaching methods indoors and out at the facility.
- * Created a bridge from student to professional life.
- * Used sustainable design strategies to achieve LEED gold certification.

Schuberth and the Opus Group worked closely with the School of Leadership Studies from the beginning, collecting ideas from students, alumni, faculty and staff. They took suggestions from all parties to create an inviting and sustainable building that would fit K-State. After one year, two DBIA awards, and the LEED gold certification, it's safe to say their collaboration paid off.

"What set us apart was that the relationship was so good," said Lori Kniffin, leadership studies administrative specialist. "They really understood what leadership studies is, and that's very apparent in the building."