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News Release

**** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ******Renovations of UConn's McMahon Hall Create Vibrant New Gathering Space on Campus***Integration of architectural and interior design creates a "pavilion in the woods"*

Boston, MA — An “inside-out” design approach at the University of Connecticut integrates interior and building design to create a whole that is more than the sum of its parts. The 19,000 SF renovation and addition at McMahon Dining Hall makes a big impact, offering sophisticated international dining in restaurant-style “display kitchens”, new connections to adjacent residential towers, and the vibrant, airy, porch-like feel of a “pavilion in the woods” - all combining to create THE hot new gathering spot on campus.

Open since the mid-1960s, McMahon operated a single cafeteria line serving a central dining room lined with rectangular cafeteria-style tables. As one of the main dining halls on its large campus, UConn aimed to increase capacity by 200 seats and make this underperforming 300-seat dining center a showcase for great food and student interaction.

The complete renovation and 5,000 SF addition to the existing 14,000 SF facility has created a lively, social environment which highlights the food and offers seating alternatives that encourage students to gather, study, dine or relax. The iconic, curved shape of the building takes advantage of the sloped, wooded site, preserving a grove of established campus trees and creating a new main entry to the two adjacent 1960's era concrete residential towers.

The new “pavilion in the woods” puts the interiors on display. Dark mullions frame the two-story high windows, echoing the lines of the trees beyond and creating a transparent interface with the outdoors. High ceilings with exposed mechanical systems and large expanses of glass framed by warm, natural materials including wood and stone add light and space. Colorful furnishings and a variety of lighting add spice and flavor, creating an ambiance and a social place where students want to be.

“McMahon Dining Hall has become a beacon on campus — the place to see and be seen. It's welcoming and exciting — an interior space that people love to be in,” states Karen Dubrovsky, PCA's Project Manager.

Based on tours of recently completed dining halls designed by PCA, UConn opted to upgrade their dining service to restaurant-style “display kitchens” and rotating cuisine choices served at several serving stations. McMahon marks a new way of thinking for UConn, with food as the star and a dining space that goes beyond just eating. Whether it’s sitting bar-style in the café, or lounging in a banquette by the new glass curtain wall overlooking the campus foliage, the newly designed dining facility serves as a modern social and dining hotspot for students and patrons at UConn. The resulting 500-seat center now serves as a magnet on campus, drawing students from beyond the McMahon dorms as well as visitors and teams attending sports events on campus.

Sustainability with Style

McMahon Dining Hall is leading the way for UConn as the first LEED Gold Commercial interiors “CI” certified project on a UConn campus. In addition, McMahon won one of a total of seven state energy efficiency awards as part of the first annual Power of Change Award sponsored by the Common Sense Fund, the Hampshire Foundation, and the Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation. The Power of Change Award recognized project teams and leadership for their innovative approaches and initiatives that highlight Connecticut’s drive to save taxpayer dollars, and realize environmental and economic benefits from saving energy in state public buildings and facilities. McMahon Dining Hall won one of two First Honors as Most-Energy Efficient Top Building Award, recognizing spaces used for state general office, professional and administrative purposes.

Additional Honors

In addition to the Most Energy Efficient Top Building Award, McMahon has been awarded a 2013 1st Place for Excellence in Renovation / Construction by the Associated Builders & Contractors and an Award of Merit from the Connecticut Building Congress.

About PCA: Prellwitz Chilinski Associates (PCA, Inc.) is a Cambridge-based, full-service architectural firm of 40 people who enjoy putting design into action on behalf of clients. Whether transforming a neglected dining facility into a must-visit destination or discovering a best-fit solution for a new residence hall on a landlocked site, our progressive, practical approach to student life facilities has enriched campus communities since 1982. Learn more at www.prellchil.com

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