

## 2020 ACE AWARDS

Category 10: Best Building Project  
(General Contractor Under \$10 Million)

## University of Colorado Denver Business School Addition

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A space that invites major events, enhances classroom learning, and fosters community; this is how to describe the recently completed Business School Addition for the University of Colorado Denver (CU Denver). This project serves to grow CU Denver's BSBA in Entrepreneurship program while also promoting increased integration of entrepreneurship classes into their existing MBA program and will support the launch of a new Master's in Entrepreneurship program.

JE Dunn, in partnership with Stantec, delivered the 16,461 SF, 3-story, building addition and urban infill project which includes a 400-plus-seat event space, two large classrooms, catering kitchen, auditorium and business incubator space. The first-floor event center is designed to transform into a variety of layouts, from a 450-person reception to a 60-person classroom and features work by local artist Taiko Chandler along with state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment. The Innovation Suite on the second floor houses the Jake Jobs Center for Entrepreneurship which strives to provide programming, scholarships, and research, in addition to a student accelerator program. The third level features classrooms and lecture spaces.

The goal of this project was to enhance CU Denver's prominence as a leading business school in Colorado by way of a state-of-the-art facility. Small but positioned for great impact, the completed addition to the CU Denver Business School now stands in what used to be a courtyard facing the alley between Lawrence and Larimer Streets and will now serve as the catalyst for ideas that have the potential to change the world!

### **Solutions of Special Projects**

JE Dunn was selected as the Construction Manager/General Contractor in May 2018 and soon recognized that the original schedule might be a challenge. Originally, drawings were scheduled to be delivered during the Thanksgiving holiday, but we discovered that the building department did not accept permit requests after Thanksgiving. By laying an early foundation of communication and trust between the owner and architect in addition to fostering a true partnership, we were able to work collectively to shift the design schedule, expediting it by one month to allow for mobilization 11/17/2018 and a construction start of 12/17/2018.

Conversations constantly revolved around maintaining the operations of the school. Making small adjustments such as simply delaying a construction process 30 minutes to accommodate a

class wrapping up to supporting CU Denver when their elevator experienced a non construction related shut down by physically helping them with food delivery to the second floor, we always put the school first!

In the end, we were able to achieve a certificate of occupancy on the actual day that it was due, a feat that surprised our client as they did not frequently experience this on past construction projects.

### **Excellence in project execution and management/team approach**

JE Dunn's team faced an uphill battle out of the gate to be selected for this project. Cody Murphy, our proposed superintendent, was a veteran superintendent with significant experience in higher education, however this was Cody's first interview with JE Dunn. On the other hand, our project manager, Mike Ray, was new to the interview process all together with this being his first project interview ever! Both were joined by Senior Project Manager, Andrew Gilstrap, an experienced project manager, but overall the team boosted only somewhat similar experience and had no experience working together. By effectively articulating that this project was not just a small project in a larger corporate portfolio, but instead a significant project with a greater purpose that would be an unwaivering priority for the team, they won the day.

The level of importance demonstrated, and our team's dedication is what resonated. They were not a small building group delivering a small project, they were a project team delivering a project of high importance.

A key to our team's success was our ability to acknowledge the unknowns of this project and address those head on. Beginning as early as the interview process, we engaged with CU Denver to dig into potential issues and drive solutions. .

Further, collocating with the CU Denver staff allowed us to feel like an extension of the CU Denver team. One of the benefits of smaller projects with tighter job office accommodations is that the team has the opportunity to become a tight-knit group. The attitude of the project was that of no stripes, everyone was treated as equals garnering the same respect. This culture of support and openness resulted in a high functioning team.

### **Construction innovations/state-of-the-art advancement**

Designed with high caliber audio visual capabilities (AV), the Business School Addition will accommodate business leaders and community organizations within their new facility making CU Denver Business School a premier school in Denver. To facilitate the demands of executing a high functioning AV system, reoccurring AV meetings were held with end users. This created

extra work for the team but allowed us to truly understand the intended functionality of the spaces. It also minimized last minute changes by allowing the process to remain flexible.

Early on we recognized that this project impacted everyone in the community. By starting with our neighbors and partners we were able to promote the positive impact that this project will have on the community for many years to come.

Directly behind the CU Denver Business School Addition project we shared an alley with many operating businesses surrounding Larimer Square. Mike Ray, Project Manager, and Cody Murphy, Superintendent, quickly set up meetings with Larimer Square to maintain neighborhood relations. We extended communication beyond our CU Denver client to all those that might be impacted by construction. Communication started with emails followed with in person meetings. These were highly successful in shifting potentially adverse relationships into a relationship where JE Dunn was ultimately seen as a trusted advisor and partner.

### **Environmental/Safety**

With construction occurring within an occupied building, keeping construction separated from the students was a priority. We focused on eliminating the opportunity to put people at risk. This included communicating openly and often with construction staff. All team members were continuously reminded that this was an active campus with a zero-tolerance policy regarding impact to students, and all team members took that responsibility seriously.

Our team constructed a hard wall to keep the construction isolated. One of the first topics covered during our inaugural Owner/Architect/Contractor (OAC) meeting included a detailed account of what everyone needed to be aware of on site. Subsequently over the course of construction we provided safety updates to cover what was changing, from crane placement to concrete pouring. We also carefully orchestrated and communicated when extreme demo was to occur. OACs were a great forum for people to voice concerns and develop solutions. Safety was specifically broken out from scheduling discussions, to place a greater emphasis on it. During these discussions we operated with full transparency, even when it came to issues such as a trade partner falling out of compliance followed by our approach to remedy the issue. Creating a culture in which everyone on site had the authority to speak up when safety regulations were not complied with, allowed us to successfully deliver this project with zero incidences

### **Excellence in client service and/or contribution to the community**

JE Dunn was fortunate to be involved early in the design process and was welcomed by our design partner, Stantec, to provide input which promoted greater quality and maximized the finish level at key spaces within the building infill. Naturally, since we were adding on to an

existing building it was imperative that the connections remained watertight. Existing building issues included balance, valve, and damper issues on the building that was originally constructed in the 1980s with an expansion that was completed in 2014. This meant we had to design and correct old building elements while incorporating new construction.

We developed a game plan on how we wanted to have the building tie-in to the existing systems, but found that the existing systems didn't match the design we had. There was no waterproofing on the old building in some spots and many of the exterior columns only contained brick, which served as more of a water screen than a water barrier. Additionally, we had to correct many of the existing fire walls in order to bring primary exit corridors up to code. This required us to get creative to get things right and minimize disruption to the facility. Each time a curve ball was thrown our way we were able to overcome the hurdle by working as a collective team to develop and execute timely solutions.

Leveraging a high level of communication and collaboration we were able to work to completion to deliver a high-quality outcome.

*“Inside and out, JE Dunn’s quality of work is exceptional. The Business School now has a premier event center space that is welcoming to our students, faculty, and staff and the community at large,” Dorothy Horrell, Ph.D., Chancellor, CU Denver.*









