

A New Home for Alpert Medical School

Philip A. Gruppuso, MD, and Peter Holden

On April 26, 2010, a “groundbreaking” ceremony celebrated the start of construction that will culminate in the opening of a new Alpert Medical School building in August 2011. This project will represent the first dedicated space for Brown’s medical school since its founding thirty-five years ago. The facility is being constructed within an existing building at 222 Richmond Street in Providence’s Jewelry District. Thus, the project offers the potential not only to benefit the medical school but also the city and state by contributing to the revitalization of downtown Providence.

HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

In 2004, the Brown University Corporation approved a proposal to increase the size of the medical school. With the advent of a \$100 million gift provided by the Warren Alpert Foundation and the renaming of the medical school in January 2007, the stage was set for a new facility. However, the financial crisis of 2007 led to a change in plans. Fortunately, the University already owned a property at 222 Richmond Street that could meet the needs of the medical school.

The building is located in the northeast corner of the Jewelry District. (Figure 1) It is bordered to the east by Eddy Street, a main thoroughfare leading from College Hill and downtown Providence to the hospital campus. It is one block from Brown’s Laboratory for Molecular Medicine and from Women & Infants’ Hospital’s Kilguss research building. From the Richmond Street side of the building to the hospital campus is a ten to fifteen-minute walk and a short shuttle ride.

The structure was built in 1928 as a factory. Four decades later, it was converted into offices. It most recently housed the offices, among others, of the Big East Athletic Conference. When Brown agreed to purchase the property in 2006, the University was uncertain how they would use the building.

The building’s 135,000 gross square feet are more than adequate to meet the



Figure 1. This satellite photo (courtesy of Google Maps) shows the relative locations of the new medical school, College Hill, downtown Providence and the Rhode Island Hospital/Women & Infants’ Hospital Campus. The bar at the lower left represents approximately one quarter mile.

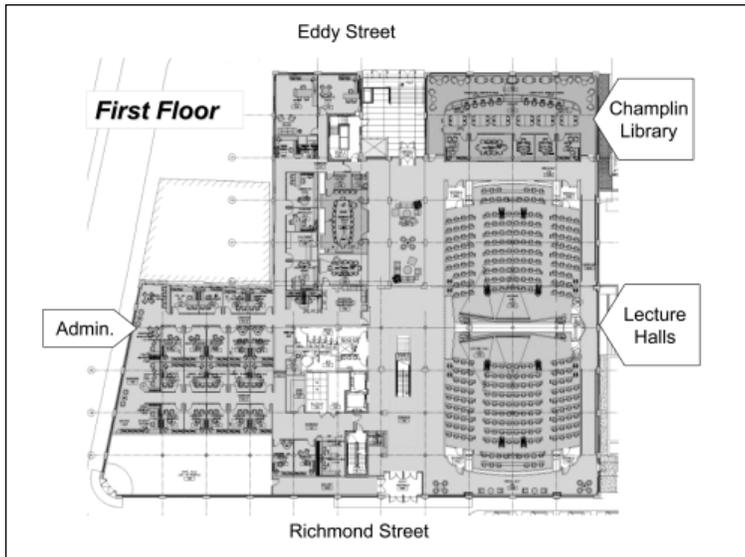


Figure 2. The floor plan for the first floor of the new facility. Note that a central atrium connects the Richmond Street and Eddy Street entrances.

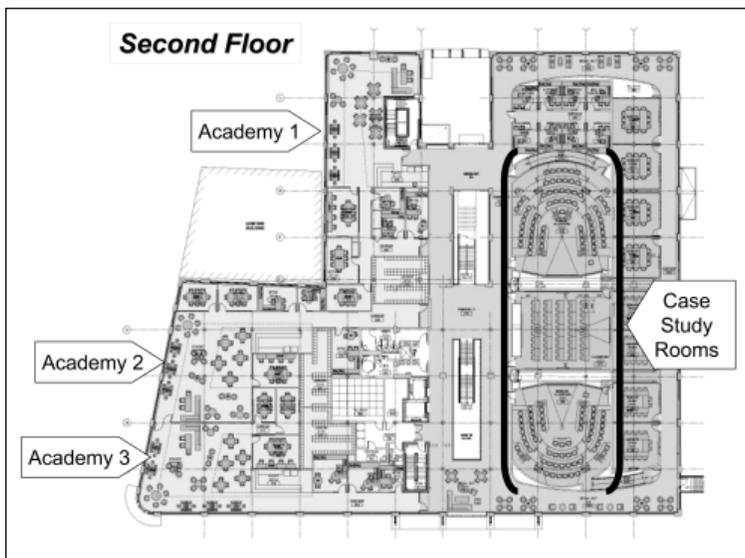


Figure 3. The floor plan for the second floor of the new facility. The atrium continues from the first floor to the second floor.

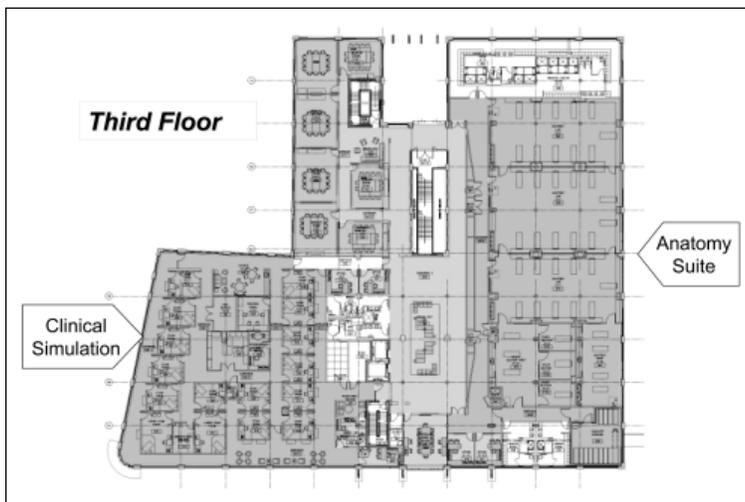


Figure 4. The floor plan for the third floor of the new facility.

needs of the AMS educational program and administration. A prominent feature of the building is its windows, which occupy nearly two thirds of its exterior. While in its present form, there is little common space and few open spaces, the original use as a factory meant that the original concrete floor and ceiling structures could make for large, open areas without needing major structural renovation.

PLANNING THE NEW MEDICAL SCHOOL

The first step in the design process was to determine how the space in the new building would be allocated. A group of medical education staff, faculty and students was convened under the leadership of Peter Holden, Director of Facilities Planning and Operations for Brown's BioMed Division. Several decisions followed. The first was that AMS would expand to a class size of 120 students after occupying the new building. Second, AMS would continue to have a traditional, dissection-based gross anatomy course. Space would be dedicated for a clinical simulation suite that could meet the needs of both educating and assessing students in the basic clinical skills. However, high fidelity medical simulation, something the hospital affiliates were developing to meet their own needs, would not be a top priority for the medical school. While the facility would clearly have to provide for small group teaching, dedicated rooms for forty to sixty students to take part in case study sessions would be an important component of the space allocation. Finally, the increase in the size of the student body necessitated a new approach to advising. This led to the decision to commit one half of one floor in the new 3-story facility to student academies (see accompanying article).

Once 222 Richmond Street was designated as the location of the project, it was decided that its development would follow a "design-build" process. In practice, this means that development of the initial design is quickly followed by a partnership between the architects and the builders such that design work continues even as construction has begun. Brown and AMS have had the good fortune to be working with two firms experienced in the design and construction of medical and science educational space. Ellenzweig Associates (<http://www.ellenzweig.com/>) has served as the architect for the project, which will be constructed by Suffolk Construction Co, Inc. (<http://www.suffolkconstruction.com/>).

THE DESIGN

The building is best viewed in terms of its three floors and the north and south areas on either side of a central common area, the atrium. The north side of the first floor (Figure 2) will be occupied by administrative offices, including a suite for the Dean and Associate Deans. This area also features a board

room with video-conferencing capability. The south end of the first floor contains two 150-seat lecture halls and the Champlin Library, the focus of a recent naming gift made by the Champlin Foundation. The lecture halls will have full video-conferencing capability, and each of the 150 seats is approximately one and a half standard seats in width. The library will serve as an electronic information technology center and reading room for both students and faculty.

The three student academies are located on the north side of the second floor. (Figure 3) Each of these areas includes study/lounge space, three meeting rooms, a pantry, locker rooms, and offices for a director, administrative assistant and faculty advisors. The south side of the second floor is home to three case study rooms, eight seminar rooms and student affairs administrative space. Two of the case study rooms will have a horseshoe shaped, tiered configuration that is optimal for interactive case discussions.

The south end of the third floor (Figure 4) will be home to the anatomy suite. The anatomy laboratory is divided into three bays, each with adequate space to accommodate ten stations of four stu-

dents each. The north end of the third floor is the location for a clinical simulation suite that includes sixteen examination rooms and space for standardized patients. Each examination room will have two video cameras connected to a control room. This will permit student interactions with standardized patients to be recorded and reviewed by students and faculty. Completing the space allocation on the third floor are an additional 8 seminar rooms.

IMPACT OF THE NEW MEDICAL SCHOOL

The opening of the new Alpert Medical School will have a profound impact on the quality of education of our students. Aside from the energizing effect that a new building will have on students and faculty, the academies, case study rooms and clinical simulation suite will make possible advising and educational approaches that are not feasible in the school's current facilities. The building will be an attractive venue for educational outreach. In addition to Continuing Medical Education for physicians, the AMS administration sees the building as an educational facility for allied health

professionals and the public. The activities in the building will help to invigorate the Jewelry District, contributing to the development of an educational and intellectual environment that will help this historic part of Providence develop into a knowledge district for what is envisioned as the new economy.

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Disclosure of Financial Interests of Authors and/or Spouses/Significant Others

The authors have no financial interests to disclose.

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2010 Diabetes Numbers-At-a-Glance: Your pocket-sized resource to diagnose and manage pre-diabetes and diabetes

The National Diabetes Education Program's (NDEP) latest resource for health care professionals is the 2010 Diabetes Numbers At-a-Glance card. This convenient, pocket-sized guide provides a list of current recommendations for diagnosis and management of pre-diabetes and diabetes based on the American Diabetes Association's Standards of Medical Care. This resource is one of several clinical practice tools for health care professionals that are available to order or download FREE from the NDEP website, <http://www.ndep.nih.gov/publications/index.aspx>.

