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US Builders Review

A milestone and a model for future innovation

Suffolk County Community College Life Sciences Building

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Suffolk County Community College (SCCC), the largest community college in New York's SUNY System, transforms the lives of more than 26,000 students by promoting intellectual discovery, social and ethical awareness and economic empowerment. Students pursue more than 100 programs of study on three eastern Long Island Campuses: Selden, the main campus; Brentwood and Riverhead.

Recently, the college's growth in enrollment has created a need for additional instructional space, new infrastructure and campus planning. SCCC has begun to revitalize its campus with the new Life Sciences Building (LSB) designed by BBS Architects, Landscape Architects and Engineers in November 2012. SCCC selected J Petrocelli Inc. (Petrocelli) after a competitive public bid, a trusted regional construction management and general contracting firm.

"The entire budget, including design, comes to $28.55 million," details Phil Florie, senior project manager for Petrocelli. "Plus, we are adding another $1.3 million for equipment and the rooftop PV system."

Picking Petrocelli for trusted experience

As a family-owned and –operated company, Petrocelli has been serving Long Island and New York City since 1959.

"We do a little bit of everything on the commercial side," details Florie. "We've done quite a few schools for the New York City Construction Authority and we're doing some large apartment buildings in Long Island City; a 27-story building and a 60-story building, but size-wise, SCCC LSB is a mid-to-larger project for Petrocelli. It is also one of the most complex buildings we have ever done with its sustainability standards and the tremendous amount of mechanical work."

Florie goes on to note that LSB is the first new building on the SCCC campus since the late 1970s. "So, they are very excited," reveals Florie.

Building blocks coming to life

Florie and the Petrocelli team broke ground on the construction of the new 63,000-square-foot, three-story LSB in November 2012. The impressive glass, brick and aluminum panel façade building consists of a structural steel superstructure and external cavity wall construction.

COMPANY AT A GLANCE

Established : 1959
Project Manager : Phil Florie
Employees : 200

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"We're about 70 percent of the way through the project now, with mid-September 2014 as the target for completion," reveals Florie. "Petrocelli has a crew of 60 to 70 doing brick work on the exterior, sheet rock on the interior and data rough-ins and curtain walls – just about everything at this stage."

Like the progression from molecules to atoms, cells to tissue, organs to organisms, the science building's electrical, plumbing and mechanical systems incorporated into the design serve as metaphors for living systems. "There's been a highly complex level of mechanical work going into the ceilings," notes

Florie. "There's the regular duct work and plumbing, but also gas, air and acid neutralization, which adds another layer of mechanical equipment. We've spent probably 100 hours coordinating these systems on paper."

From the internal building blocks to the external aesthetics, the LSB also features an atrium with a 16-screen video wall and three large fabric sails. The most notable aspect from the front is the glass façade. "This part is complete except for finishing beauty caps," adds Florie. "The glass façade accounts for $4 million of the project and was close to two months' worth of work. The steel behind the façade is exposed, so we needed to paint the steel first, which was a very tricky task with the New York winter we've had this year."

Even through one of the toughest winter's the Northeast has seen in years, Florie says his team only lost five days due to weather. "We didn't shut the job down once with the exception of maybe five days," he adds.

Targeting Gold

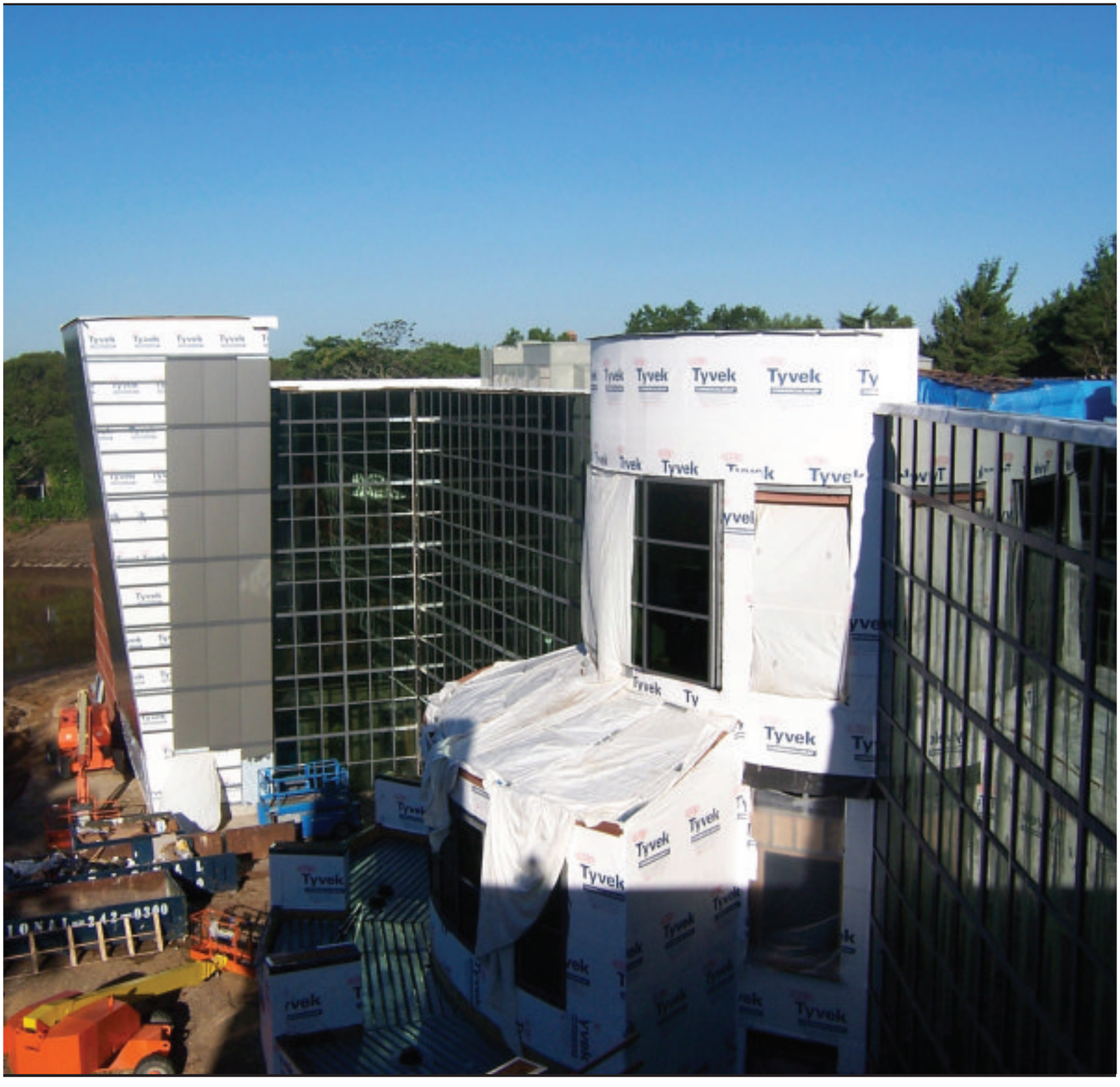
One of the most outstanding aspects of SCCC LSB is that the facility is targeting LEED-Gold certification, a standard that embraces SCCC's life-learning project concept. It provides a highly sustainable site that will serve as a model for the college, Suffolk County and the greater community as a local example that global issues can be addressed in an educational setting.

"We are targeting LEED-Gold certification," notes Florie. "One of the biggest LEED components is the entire building has a thermal insulation membrane and an array of wet meadows to recharge rainwater."

Any debris from the project site is also being sorted and recycled for future construction use. "We're also trying to stay within a 500-mile radius with our product and material sourcing," shares Florie. "We're doing really well with this goal, only using one or two suppliers out of the range, because that's the only place the products are manufactured."

SCCC's LSB is well on track and Florie and his team are excited to deliver the milestone project. "There certainly have been challenges and unique conditions, but at this point SCCC is very happy with our performance," he says.

The Suffolk County Community College Life Sciences Building is the first new building on the Ammerman Campus in nearly 40 years and will serve as a model for future innovation in educational design projects, while also providing a healthier, inspiring environment for students. •



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