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building dedicated at Florida southern

New Addition to FSC Echoes Wright's Motifs

Structure's use of geometric patterns, glass recalls famed architect of campus.

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THE LEDGER

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LAKELAND | The latest addition to the Florida Southern College campus is yet another variation on the architectural theme composed by famed American architect Frank Lloyd Wright.

The Christoverson Humanities Building, a three-floor, 25,000-square-foot structure of stone and glass that overlooks Lake Hollingsworth, was dedicated in a ceremony on Friday. It is the latest of 10 construction projects - including five new buildings - on campus in the past three years.



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In the lobby of the Christoverson Humanities Building architect Robert A.M. Stern discusses the lines and structure of the building and keeping it true to Frank Lloyd Wright designs. The dedication of the Florida Southern College building took place Friday November 12, 2010, in Lakeland, Florida before hundreds of faculty, students and supporters.

Designed by New York architect Robert A.M. Stern, who also designed two new dormitories at FSC, the Christoverson Building features a two-story lobby with a glass facade, above which is an upward-curved roof supported by four sets of triple steel poles painted in the signature red that was favored by Wright. The extensive use of glass and simple geometric patterns was characteristic of Wright, who designed 11 structures on campus, the largest collection of his works in the world.

Stern, addressing faculty, students and dignitaries gathered for the ceremony, said FSC "enjoys a unique architectural heritage." He praised the school's board of trustees for their commitment to preserve the Wright-designed buildings and to ensure that new buildings complement them.

"To go back and go forward at the same time is the healthiest of paths to the future. ... This was a second opportunity for us to add to Florida Southern's incomparable architectural legacy," he said.

Later, Stern said the most important part of the building's design is that it enables people to enjoy a view of the lake.

"Wright had always wanted to see the campus open up to the lake, but he didn't live long enough to see that happen," he said. "In the evening hours, people can sit and look out over the water."

The building is named for Marcene Christoverson, a member of FSC's board of trustees and CEO of St. John Associates in the Bronx, N.Y., and her late husband, Robert.

Christoverson gave \$4 million to the college for the building. In her remarks, she joked that a few years ago FSC President Anne Kerr showed her an artist's rendering of the building - with Christoverson's name on it - and asked for a major gift to fund it.

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"When she gives you that big, wide smile, she makes you an offer you absolutely cannot refuse. Only Dr. Kerr could have convinced me to do such a thing," she said.

The college did not disclose the cost of the building, which will house the English and Modern Language departments. It includes five classrooms, 20 offices, three laboratories and a film studies theater.

Kerr called the building "spectacular."

"Its boldness and vibrancy epitomize Marcene's and indeed all our donors' ardent desire to encourage the achievement of the great American dream through educational excellence," she said.

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