

Best Educational Building • Award of Merit

Christopher Newport Hall

Owner / Developer: Christopher Newport University
Architect: Glavé & Holmes Architecture, P.C.
Contractor: Whiting-Turner Contracting Company

Hailed as the “jewel in the crown” of Christopher Newport University, Christopher Newport Hall sits at the eastern end of the Great Lawn, the green space that serves as the unifying center of the school’s academic core. The hall is a “one-stop shop” with facilities to support student services and student academic success.

The \$39.9 million, 82,000-square-foot facility, slated for LEED Silver certification, encompasses offices, meeting rooms, presentation venues and student transaction areas on four floors. It replaces a four-level 1980s brick slab and ribbon-windowed modernist structure, which didn’t fit the campus’ classical aesthetic direction. With its Corinthian characteristics, the new building reflects the Neo-Classical style of other campus buildings.

The hall is designed to delight first-time visitors/prospective students and their parents. A grand staircase leading upstairs opens to vistas previously unavailable with the prior building. An arched cast stone base supporting the terrace majestically distinguishes the hall from other campus buildings.

Formally and symbolically, Christopher Newport Hall is the focal point of the lawn and serves as the campus’ iconic center. Its Corinthian portico is a prestigious addition to the pomp and circumstance that accompanies CNU’s graduation ceremonies that take place on the lawn.

Judges’ comments: As the crown jewel of an emerging neoclassical campus, Christopher Newport Hall completes the great lawn which is the focal point of the campus. The placement of a building is as important as the design, and the siting of Christopher Newport Hall leaves no doubt about its importance. The building is symbolically and literally the front door to the campus. It serves not only as the venue for orientation but is the “One Stop Shop” for student services and academic

success programs. The university’s administrative offices are also housed there along with financial aid and the office of admissions.

The architecture describes the building’s importance through the use of an elevated main floor, or piano nobile, reached by mounting a set of monumental stairs. This feature recalls earlier courthouses and civic buildings intended to inspire awe. A nicely proportioned courtyard brings light to the center of the building and gives a sense of human scale to the composition. The building is exquisitely detailed from the Corinthian columns, to the rusticated base to the jack arches, to forms and motifs carried inside from outside.

In an ingenious move to preserve the volumetric experience of the dome, the architects used a glass floor at the fourth floor since the building code did not allow the opening to continue more than three floors up. This allows people on any floor to see through to the top of the dome. The building reads as a finely crafted, careful, and cohesive composition inside and out.

