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URI's home of engineering certified LEED Silver

Fascitelli Center for Advanced Engineering and historic Bliss Hall recognized for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design

URI Engineering Quad bordered by the Fascitelli Center for Advanced Engineering and Bliss Hall, both of which have earned the designation of LEED Silver from the United States Green Building Council. (URI Photo/Sean McVeigh)

KINGSTON, R.I. – Oct. 7, 2021 – The home of the University of Rhode Island's College of Engineering is now designated LEED Silver, joining more than a dozen other buildings on the University's Kingston Campus. The Fascitelli Center for Advanced Engineering, which opened in Fall 2019, and the newly-renovated Bliss Hall, which originally opened in 1928 and is part of the University of Rhode Island Historic District named to the National Register of Historic Places in 2018, have both been certified as LEED Silver.

LEED Silver, a designation from the United States Green Building Council, is one of four possible ratings based on a 100-point scale across multiple categories showing exemplary leadership in

sustainable building practices. LEED certification provides independent verification of a building or neighborhood's green features, allowing for the design, construction, operations and maintenance of resource-efficient, high-performing, healthy, cost-effective buildings. LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.

The buildings become the 14th and 15th buildings to obtain LEED status on the Kingston Campus. With this latest recognition, the University now has three LEED Certified buildings; seven LEED Silver buildings, including Fascitelli and Bliss; and five buildings certified LEED Gold.

"Importantly, LEED certification translates into higher energy efficiency rates and big energy savings for the University and the state," said University of Rhode Island Director of Capital Projects Paul DePace. "But designing buildings that incorporate the use of sustainable materials, create open spaces for students to gather and add green space to our campus also make the University a nicer place to be for all of us."

The designer for both projects was Ballinger Architects and the contractor was Dimeo Construction Company. Hill International served as project manager. Construction on the Fascitelli Center, the largest construction project in the University's history, began in February 2017. The exterior of the six-story, 183,500 square foot building, along with many interior walls, is almost all glass – allowing natural light into core spaces. The building features an energy efficient electrical system, which includes the use of daylight sensors that control lighting and "harvest" daylight by shutting lights off in perimeter spaces when it is bright outside.

To help conserve energy and reduce the "heat island" effect common on buildings with dark roofs that absorb heat, the new roofs of both buildings were specified as white material. The projects' minimized building footprints and creation of a large engineering quad with a reduction in paved areas added open, green space outdoors for social gatherings. The use of low-water-use plantings that have no need for landscaping irrigation also reduced typical water use by more than 20%. The proximity of both buildings to public and campus bus and shuttle routes was also significant in the sustainability calculation of the projects.

The renovation and expansion of Bliss Hall began in January 2017. The 38,000-square-foot existing building was gutted to the steel frame and stone exterior. A 15,000-square-foot addition was built on the north side of the building. All of the windows were replaced with historically appropriate modern energy efficient windows. New plumbing, mechanical, fire prevention and electrical infrastructure

were also included as part of the renovation. The new interior includes classrooms, labs, student areas, and the offices of the College of Engineering.

To improve indoor air quality, builders utilized low emitting materials in construction for both buildings and installed energy efficient ventilation systems that bring a high degree of fresh air into the building and also include a heat recovery system to save on energy consumption. Bliss Hall also utilized a Variable Refrigerant Flow system for air conditioning, further reducing energy use.

“The State of Rhode Island has set a goal that state-funded projects should meet LEED Certification status,” said Jim Devol, project manager for Hill International. “With these two buildings URI has gone beyond that.”