Unique facilities

Novel campuses entice students

By E. Rose Scarff
Contributing Writer

Colleges compete every year for the best students and in these budget-aware times, attracting and keeping these students is more important than ever. If a student has to choose between schools with similar academic offerings and comparable quality faculty, sometimes the deciding factor can be something tangible – like a building's design or a type of building that no other campus has.

“We do everything we can to get prospective students on campus,” says Theresa Bedoya, vice president for admissions and financial aid at Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA). “Our academic offerings are comparable to other top art colleges in the country, but our campus is what sets us apart.”

The MICA campus has a long history in Baltimore, predating their Main Building, a 1907 Renaissance Revival style listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Along with the Gateway, their newest and most modern residence facility, and Mount Royal Station, the first of several buildings in the area which MICA has creatively renovated, MICA has a truly unique urban campus.

Many of the buildings had a former use (train station, shoe factory, office building), but have been redesigned for a new function (studios, offices, classrooms, galleries, cafes). “I like to think of MICA as a steward of adaptive reuse,” says Mike Molla, vice president for operations at MICA. “We adapt the space to the students’ needs rather than make the students adapt to the space.”

This is equally true of the new buildings as well. For example, the Gateway is a residence hall with student apartments and studio space. But it also houses the Center for Career Development, student galleries, a BBOX, a theatre and a café. For students, this translates as a place to live, work, recreate and get guidance, all in one building. The Commons and the Meyerhoff House, two other student residences, are similarly well designed for living and studio space, as well as other amenities. In fact, all of the buildings at MICA could probably be called multi-use, from the very modern Brown Center to the traditional Main Building, the mixture of offices and classrooms, libraries and galleries, studios and auditoriums matches the variety of MICA’s offerings in art and design, modern and traditional, in every medium.

If few college campuses can match the variety of architecture that makes up MICA, then even fewer colleges can boast that they house a planetarium. But College of Notre Dame of Maryland has had one since 1967, tucked away in their Science Building, in a domed room that seats 40. Recently, the Kathleen Price Bryan Planetarium has been completely renovated with a new Digitarium Alpha 2 projector replacing the old analog one with the latest technology. “That has made my job much easier,” says Joseph Di Rienzi, Ph.D., professor of physics at Notre Dame. “There are no mechanical parts to break down and cause problems.”

With the help of a lab assistant, Di Rienzi uses the planetarium for coursework in astronomy, as a lab for general physics classes and in a graduate-level course on the study of deep space objects. In addition to using the planetarium for astronomy and physics courses, it is also used in conjunction with other departments for special events.

“Since the planetarium can be set up to show the night sky at any place and time,” says Di Rienzi, “I was able to show a group of classical astronomy students how the night sky looked at the end of the Trojan War.” At other times he has done shows for international students showing the night sky over other countries and continents. He has even entertained groups of elementary school students who have come on visits, and enlightened education majors who might someday teach in a school with a planetarium.

With the planetarium, Di Rienzi can not only zoom in on distant stars and planets, but he is also able to expand the science aspect of the liberal arts in creative ways. Interdisciplinary study is a hallmark of Notre Dame and the planetarium shows are yet another way to bring history and literature alive for their students.

In another realm altogether is the building of a
new gymnasium at the Owings Mills campus of Stevenson University to replace the one currently in use on the Stevenson campus. “Stevenson understands student needs and tends to attract really good kids,” says Brett Adams, director of athletics at Stevenson. “Our student athletes come from all different career majors and we structure things so that they can also take part in other aspects of campus life, such as theater or the campus newspaper. These kids play for the love of their sport, not as a potential career.”

Love of the sport is very evident in the design of the new gymnasium. A two-story facility built around the main court, its soaring ceiling makes it the perfect size for Division III basketball and volleyball and its floor provides an ideal playing surface. Locker rooms are on the first level next to the playing court. Spectators enter on the second level and walk down to their seats. In this way, entering spectators don’t distract the volleyball or basketball players warming up on the court.

The building is not only people friendly, but also tech friendly. “It has wireless connections throughout, TV quality lighting and an LCD scoreboard,” says Adams. “There are electrical outlets located everywhere throughout the gym for easy videotaping of the game by the team or by their parents, with no more extension cords running everywhere and tripping people up.”

The new gym is adjacent to Caves Athletic and Wellness Center, which serves the general student body as well as the student athletes with a fully equipped fitness center, racquet ball court, domed turf area for inclement weather practice and plasma screen equipped lounge areas for recreation or team meetings.

But it’s not all about sports at Stevenson as their 95 percent career placement record shows. Nor is everyone star-gazing at Notre Dame while they pursue their degree. Neither are MICA students spending their time admiring the buildings on campus rather creating art. However, that little something extra about the campus just might be the deciding point to get them there in the first place.

Success by design

MICA designs guide students

Specially designed bike racks and art sculptures in front of all the MICA buildings identify them as part of the campus so that new students can easily find their way around.

From Notre Dame to NASA

The background and experience that College of Notre Dame of Maryland students gain in their work in the Kathleen Bryan Price Planetarium has helped many of them earn internships with NASA.

Stevenson’s next athletic project

Stevenson University’s new 60,000-square-foot gymnasium should be finished this spring and a new football stadium (for their newly formed football team) is to be built adjacent to the gym on the Owings Mills campus.
left: College of Notre Dame of Maryland professor Joseph Di Rienzi, Ph.D., works with students in the Kathleen Price Bryan Planetarium, which is used for coursework in astronomy, as a lab for general physics classes and in a graduate-level course on the study of deep space objects.
Human services 2
Maryland colleges offer programs that train students to help others locally and worldwide

Global economy 3
Students gather the skills and cultural knowledge needed to succeed in the world of business

Cyber security 4
Careers in information assurance

surge as more companies boast an online presence

Nursing technology 5
The nursing shortage prompts local universities to make the changes needed to address the problem

Registration directory 6
A listing of contact information for colleges and universities in Maryland. It's time to connect and move forward.

Education publishes five times a year in February, April, July, September and November.

To advertise, call Shannon Regan 410-332-6908.

© 2010 The Baltimore Sun Media Group