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University of Delaware

Jastak-Burgess Hall

Through the addition of a new central structure, Jastak-Burgess Hall combines two former fraternity houses, Sigma Phi Epsilon, built in 1922, and Sigma Nu, built in 1929. These two buildings were completely renovated and now serve as the headquarters for the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature with 62 faculty offices, as well as a conference center and a language laboratory. Bridging between them is a new circulation core and main entrance.

The central campus of the Newark-based university is arranged around a mall, The Green, which organizes several of the school's original and significant buildings.

The two fraternity houses anchored the north terminus of this mall. This project gave ABHA Architects of Wilmington an opportunity to not only join two existing buildings, but to join them with a new structure that became both the formal building entrance and a fitting focal point at the end of The Green.

A significant design challenge was to develop a plan that provided a seamless transition between the two existing structures, while also ensuring code compliance and ADA accessibility. The issue was further complicated by the residential scale of the buildings, differing floor elevations and roof shapes, limited space available for the new infill due to the proximity of the two

buildings, and the need to blend the exteriors in both scale and materials. Acting as a transept between the original structures, the addition continues the roofline and introduces an intersecting roof at the infill. This projection draws attention to the building's new main entrance. At this central location, the building volume cascades down in scale to a welcoming entry porch, appropriately sized and detailed in the Georgian vernacular of the main campus.

The final design uses the addition as a transition piece, housing an elevator and some of the building's support systems. Exterior materials were carefully selected to ensure that the final building would appear to have always been one structure.