

Eckstein Hall: Finding Success in the Details of Daily Life

Big lockers, more electrical outlets, better chairs, oh my!

Nuts and bolts. First-time visitors to Eckstein Hall, the home of Marquette University Law School, react to the beauty and spaciousness of the building. But ask the people who use it day after day—law students, particularly—and you are more likely to hear about the nuts and bolts, the small-scale things that have made the building a success.

A generous supply of electrical outlets. Classroom chairs that aren't attached to tabletops—and tabletops with ample room. Spacious lockers. Easy access to good food in the Tory Hill Café. An ample supply of bathrooms. Loads of technological pluses.

A year after the opening of the new building, more than 15,000 visitors later (that's visitors, not in any way counting law students or faculty), and with more than 425 events having been held, it is clear that the Law School made a great leap forward when it moved the short distance from its longtime home in Sensenbrenner Hall to the \$85 million Eckstein Hall. That is true both for the school's core function of educating law students and for its role as a catalyst and crossroads for public policy inquiries.

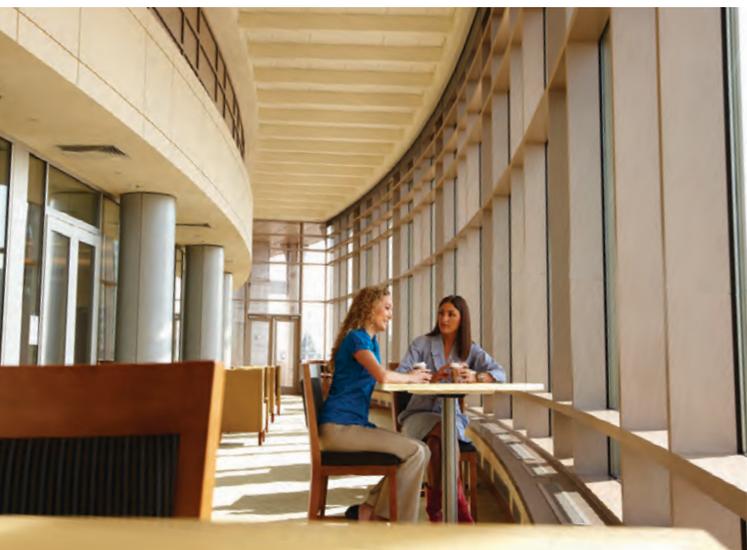
"The building is simply beautiful," said Stephanie Chavers, a second-year student. "The school really

tried to make the building a home for the students. You can really do everything in Eckstein."

Chavers pointed to pluses a casual visitor wouldn't consider. "The classrooms have enough gadgets for any technology-savvy student," she said. "I love the fact that when I go to class, I am not fighting to find an outlet to charge a laptop."

Eckstein Hall was designed with the expectation that students and staff would spend large stretches of time in the building in productive, positive states of mind. Peter Prigge, entering his third year as a student, said that he is often in the building from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. The reasons he's able to do that include the general spaciousness of the building, the good settings for studying, the availability of food, and the fitness center, which he uses often. "It's like a home almost," he said. "Sensenbrenner wasn't a place where you wanted to be all day."

Amy Rogan-Mehta, a part-time student, said, "I've noticed that most students find the spot in Eckstein Hall that is comfortable for them. My space has been by the fireplace in the Tory Hill Café. I sit right there in the cafeteria. I prefer a little bit of sound. I get to see people as they come and go. It's really comfortable."



Cassandra Jones said, “A group of my friends and I use a conference room for most of our studying. It’s really convenient and usually quiet. When I’m not in class, that’s usually where I can be found.”

Pam Stokke-Ceci, a part-time student with 3L status, said, “The ergonomics of the classrooms are so much better. There’s room to spread out, unlike in the Sensenbrenner classrooms, and the acoustics of the rooms are a big improvement.”

One big improvement, in Stokke-Ceci’s view: “The number of bathrooms for women on each floor is something we were very pleased about.” In Sensenbrenner, the limited facilities created a time crunch, particularly between evening classes, she said.

Professor Michael McChrystal played an integral role in the planning and construction of Eckstein Hall. He is pleased with the way it turned out. “I enjoy arriving at it, I enjoy walking into the building,” he said. “It kind of gives me a good attitude about my work, just to walk in the door. There’s this quality of professionalism and excellence and comfort.”

“I find the classroom spaces to be just really well designed,” McChrystal said. “You have a sense of being close to the students, that they’re comfortable, that the

technology works, that stuff like acoustics and sight lines work exceptionally well. The main business of the building, holding classes for law students, I have found to be just a really good experience.”

McChrystal said he also is pleased with how the event space in the building has turned out. “I think the Appellate Courtroom works exceptionally well” for events such as the “On the Issues” sessions hosted by Mike Gousha, distinguished fellow in law and public policy. McChrystal described the room as “elegant, comfortable, and spacious. . . . It communicates that it’s in a law school building while still being able to fulfill a role that may not be a traditional law school role.” The room was the site of debates between candidates for U.S. Senate and for Wisconsin governor that were televised live statewide in October 2010.

“It’s pleasing that a lot of the things that were intended to be accomplished were in fact accomplished,” McChrystal said.

The new building took some getting used to, students said. Sensenbrenner Hall was small and crowded—but that also meant you saw anyone who was there. The student lockers were tiny and of limited use, but they were all in the same place. Eckstein Hall itself is





spacious, and, as students requested during the planning of the building, the lockers are almost as big as closets, but they're located in clusters around the building.

Jones said, "Now everything is so spread out. . . . But I wouldn't give up my huge locker for anything. So it's just a tradeoff."

Are there things to work on? Sure. McChrystal said he has some in mind, including improvements to the café's décor. Students suggested some things they'd like to see, such as more availability of coffee when the café is closed and more places to post notices of student activities. Several said that limiting the third and fourth floors of the building to Law School students and staff in the evening and on weekends was a big improvement—Eckstein Hall had become too popular among non-law students, presenting problems for getting study spaces. And everyone agreed they'd like more parking in the building—one wish that is not going to be granted (and some evidence of how quickly baselines change once one has even a little bit of something never dreamed of before).

But the sentiment that the building is a winner seems unanimous. And from outside the Law School community, Eckstein Hall has won recognition, including a Mayor's Design Award, a Wisconsin Builder's Award, and the *Milwaukee Business Journal's* Real Estate Project of the Year award. Dean Joseph D. Kearney received the Milwaukee Bar Association's "Lawyer of the Year" award, primarily for his work in leading the Eckstein Hall project (see separate entry to the right). The building has also received LEED Silver Certification as an internationally recognized "green" building. And WISN-TV (Channel 12 in Milwaukee) won a special commendation in the prestigious national Walter Cronkite Awards competition for the political debates hosted by Gousha last fall.

In Prigge's words, "This building sets the standard for law schools now." ■

Dean Kearney Urges "Attention

On June 14, 2011, Dean Joseph D. Kearney received the Milwaukee Bar Association's Lawyer of the Year Award, which recognizes "the lawyer whose activities and extraordinary accomplishments over the previous year reflect well not only on the award winner, but also on the profession in general." Michael J. Cohen, of Meissner Tierney Fisher & Nichols, presented the award, pointing particularly to the dean's leadership of the project of Eckstein Hall, which has occasioned much ongoing attention, enthusiasm, and activity on the part of the legal community in the region. Dean Kearney's acceptance remarks follow.

Thank you, Mike. I am very grateful for your kind comments. The award singles me out, but, as often, the Eckstein Hall project required great collaboration. So whether it is Tom Ganey and Mike McChrystal, respectively the University Architect and my faculty colleague who collaborated with me on this project from the beginning, or Christine Wilczynski-Vogel and John Novotny and Father Wild, administrative colleagues and the president of Marquette University, or Ray and Kay Eckstein or the other Marquette alumni and other lawyers or public citizens who contributed to this project, from Mike Grebe to the late Ralph Huiras and Joe Zilber to Jim Janz, Bob and Carol Bonner, Wylie and Bette Aitken, Natalie Black, Frank Daily and Julie Ebert, Joe and Sally Schoendorf, Stuart and Cindy Brotz, or any number of other folks whom time does not permit me to mention (truly), I am immensely grateful for the essential roles that so many in the Marquette Law School community, broadly conceived, played in the