UC Merced receives fourth LEED Gold for environmental certification

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MERCED -- For the fourth time since 2007, a recently completed building on the campus of the University of California, Merced, has earned LEED "Gold" certification from the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) for excellence in environmentally responsible design, construction and operation, the university said today.

The 211,000-square-foot Science & Engineering Building, completed in January 2006, provides laboratories, classrooms and office space for faculty and students whose work often requires highly sophisticated equipment, facilities and support services. The building meets these needs while achieving exemplary performance in water and energy usage, natural lighting, air quality, waste diversion and recycling, the use of locally supplied and/or recycled building materials and other factors evaluated under the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) program.

Previously, the university's Central Plant complex, the Leo & Dottie Kolligian Library, and the Classroom and Office Building were awarded LEED Gold certification, while another facility, the Valley Terraces and the Yablokoff-Wallace Dining Commons earned LEED Silver. No other university in the country has earned LEED Silver or better for every building on campus.

The USGBC evaluates buildings on a wide range of design and performance factors under its internationally recognized LEED program. On the five-tier USGBC scale, Gold is the second-highest level attainable. It is one level above the target level (Silver) set by the University of California system for all new construction, and two levels above the standard set by the State of California (base LEED certified) for all new public buildings.

"Earning Gold certification for a structure as complex as the Science & Engineering Building is a major achievement for the design and construction team," said Thomas Lollini, FAIA, associate vice chancellor for physical planning, design and construction. "With four of our first five buildings earning Gold certification, we now believe we can raise our previous minimum standard from Silver to Gold. It is our intention to meet or exceed the minimum requirements for Gold certification on all future campus structures, making UC Merced by far the most environmentally progressive campus in the nation."

Lollini said the university is actively sharing its sustainable development practices with others throughout the Central Valley and beyond in hopes of raising the performance bar for all new construction. Architects and builders from throughout the United States and as far as Japan, Russia and Singapore have visited the campus to learn about sustainable design, construction and operation of the buildings.

"We want UC Merced to serve as a model of sustainable development, showcasing the many ways to make wise use of water, energy, sunlight and other precious resources in a highly cost-effective manner," he said. "Sustainable building practices are gaining unstoppable momentum around the world because of their many benefits to the environment, to the people who use today's buildings and to future generations. It is fitting that the first new American research university of the 21st century should lead the way toward a sustainable future."

The U.S. Green Building Council is an independent, nonprofit organization that uses a point system to rate buildings on 69 different measures of sustainability. Ratings are based on the total number of points awarded, as follows: 0-25 points, not rated; 26-32 points, base certified; 33-38 points, Silver certified; 39-51 points, Gold certified; 52-69 points, Platinum certified.

To learn more about UC Merced's Environmental Stewardship Program, visit http://www.ucmerced.edu/about_ucmerced/environmentalstewardship.asp.

For more information about previous LEED awards for UC Merced buildings:

Classroom & Office Building at UC Merced Awarded LEED "Gold" Certification for Environmental Excellence (March 26, 2008)

Library Complex Awarded "Gold" LEED Certification (Jan. 18, 2008)

Central Plant Earns "Gold" LEED Award (March 13, 2007)

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