



Philanthropist Golisano donates \$7.5 million to Roberts Wesleyan College community center; New \$13.5 million, 25,000 s/f project designed by SWBR

October 01, 2019 - Upstate New York

Rochester, NY Roberts Wesleyan College received a gift of \$7.5 million from Paychex founder and philanthropist Tom Golisano to build a new Community Engagement Center. The 25,000 s/f two-story, center will serve as a hub for connection, community interaction and student life resources, as well as a workplace for Roberts' growing custom training and education programs.

The center will be named the Golisano Community Engagement Center in Golisano's honor. Groundbreaking for the \$13.5 million building is slated for fall 2020 and construction is expected to take 14 months, with the grand opening set for fall 2021. The new center will be located on the campus, north of Westside Dr.

SWBR is the architect for the project. SWBR's Ryan Zegarelli, AIA, project manager, said "The Community Engagement Center will be a transformational project for Roberts Wesleyan College. It solidifies and further enhances their commitment to the Rochester community and to traditional and non-traditional students. In addition to providing a home for each of the new institutes, this building will provide much needed social/gathering space and will become the new heart of the campus."

As the project architect, SWBR designed elements of the building:

- A large "front porch" will provide social gathering spaces outside;
- Each space designed with multipurpose use in mind supporting the college's initiatives and commitment to community;
- A double-height lobby space with central stair that leads up to a small chapel;
- A 3,000 s/f event space that can be divided into five classroom or meeting spaces;
- A commercial kitchen to support both large and small events; and
- A 3,000 s/f student commons that will promote social interaction and networking.

The brick building will utilize traditional forms with a contemporary twist to blend with both the campus buildings and the adjacent residential area.

This gift and Golisano's \$5 million donation in 2001 for the B. Thomas Golisano Library are the largest financial gifts in Roberts Wesleyan's 153-year history.

The Golisano Community Engagement Center will house training programs, including the college's newly launched Community Institutes, and provide easy access to career development and student-life resources. It will be the first building on campus to provide centralized meeting space and community interaction opportunities for all students—traditional undergrads, commuters, adult students, and students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. With a growing population of adult and graduate students, especially in the area of teacher education, this center will provide student-centered spaces for studying and collaborating on group assignments.

Roberts Wesleyan's Community Institutes, which provide custom educational solutions and resources to Rochester-area businesses and organizations, offer certificate and training programs separate from the degree-based education the college already offers. They were designed to meet the significant and unserved demands of companies and organizations that seek effective and affordable learning to gain real-world experience and insight.†The institutes are a go-to resource for businesses, government, health care administration, law enforcement, school districts and churches.

The Golisano Community Engagement Center is a key component of the college's five-year strategic plan, established in 2016. The plan focuses on three aspects: engaged campus culture, innovative growth and transformational partnerships. The strategies in the plan include new programs, new buildings, new initiatives and new hires. The Golisano Community Engagement Center aligns with all three areas of focus and will provide a direct impact on the college's culture and partnerships.

In March 2017, the college began preliminary research for this project, conducting interviews with alumni, friends of the college, local businesses, thought leaders and students. Data and exploratory research proved that a building of this nature would be a destination for training, networking and student collaboration.

New York Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540