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Architectural Design of The University Honors Oasis

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As the University Honors Program rapidly expands, it has become increasingly necessary for a new space to be provided to accommodate for the growth. This design is the product of close interaction with the UHP staff and students. Interviews were conducted to gain an understanding of what sort of spaces are both necessary and desired in a new building. There is a need for more offices for a growing staff, lots of flexible classroom space, an auditorium for the lecture series, and a library.

The building is located on the Southern Illinois University campus between Morris Library and Faner Hall. This location was picked for its centrality on campus. Honors students from any side of campus can easily gather here at this intellectual hub. Furthermore, it was greatly desired by the faculty to maintain their beautiful views of the woods.

To maintain optimal functionality and similarity to surrounding buildings, the design is mostly rectangular in shape. The main entrance on the west facade mirrors the side entrance of Morris Library, creating a focus for pedestrian traffic. This dialogue with pedestrians is further articulated by a separation of the auditorium from the main building, creating a complex that welcomes students as they pass through this busy walking path. The auditorium was also separated so that it may be large and able to function better for the rest of the university, which is in need of an auditorium this size.

A tall glass tower, inspired by Morris Library’s main entrance, acts as a beacon of knowledge. Tall vertical fins, inspired by Faner Hall’s vertical shading devices, bring to the design a contemporary look, while helping to shade the east and west facades. The small amphitheater is sized to allow space for an honors class to be held outdoors among the trees. More outdoor gather or study spaces are provided by a covered porch on the first floor and a balcony on the second floor.

This new Honors building will act as an oasis for honors students who may find in it a place to fuel their intellectual curiosities, renew their passion for learning, interact with like-minded peers, or even spend a few extra minutes studying.
Legend:
1. Library
2. Study area
3. Silent Study Room
4. Covered Balcony
5. Stairs
6. Elevator
7. Walk-on Green Roof

Third Floor Plan