

NEW UNION WINS PRAISE FOR DESIGN EXCELLENCE



- [See the ASU issue article here](#)

The [Harre Union](#), a facility built to enrich the sense of community at Valpo, has won two awards citing it as a model for excellence in exterior and interior design. Valpo's newest building has received the Collegiate Citation in this year's [American School and University Educational Interiors Showcase](#), the premier competition for excellence in the interior design of educational facilities, as well as a Community Improvement Award from the [Greater Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce](#).

[President Mark Heckler](#) said the desire to create attractive and inspiring spaces for members of the campus community and visitors was one of the guiding principals in the development of the Harre Union.

"The campus environment plays a vital role in the Valpo student experience," President Heckler said. "Harre Union, through its outstanding design, immediately became an inviting place for people to gather when it opened in January. Students, faculty and staff now have more opportunities to engage in informal conversations when they see one another in the building's hallways or dining facilities, and the numerous activities hosted by the Harre Union complement learning that takes place in the classroom."

Harre Union is the third University facility built since 2004 to win acclaim for its design. Valpo's [Christopher Center for Library and Information Resources](#) (opened in 2004) has been honored by the American Institute of Architects, American Library Association and International Interior Design Association. [Kallay-Christopher Hall](#) (opened in 2005) has received design awards from AIA's Northern Indiana chapter and College Planning and Management magazine.

The Collegiate Citation is presented to a new building at an institution of higher education judged as the most outstanding example of excellence in interior design. A jury of interior design professionals who reviewed Harre Union and hundreds of other submissions in the competition noted that "[t]he artful selection of warm, quality materials will ensure this building will age gracefully."

The 202,000-square-foot Harre Union will be featured in the August issue of American School and University magazine as the Collegiate Citation winner.

The Greater Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce also will recognize Harre Union for enhancing the attractiveness of the city during its 42nd annual Community Improvement Awards ceremony on July 7, taking place at Harre Union.

Harre Union was selected for the award based upon the visual impact of the building's exterior, creativity and innovativeness in its design and use of materials, compatibility with the environment, enhancement of the community's quality of life and promoting pride in the community as a whole.

Larry Mosher, director of the union, noted that construction of Harre Union just a few steps from the Christopher Center, Chapel of the Resurrection and Center for the Arts has created a campus core where facilities supporting the social, academic, spiritual and creative components of student life are in close proximity.

"The Harre Union, and its outstanding interior and exterior design, is playing an essential role in strengthening five key aspects of the student experience: community, leadership, service, vocation and fun," Mosher said. "Each of these keys supports the University's mission as a community of learning and faith."

Design architect for the Harre Union was Sasaki Associates Inc., a Boston-based firm that is a leading designer of college facilities. Design Organization Inc. of Valparaiso, which has designed other University facilities, is the architect of record.

Vic Ritter, a principal for Design Organization, said extensive use of natural materials such as limestone and wood in Harre Union creates a warm, welcoming environment for people inside the building, and invites those passing by to enter.

"The interior and exterior design helps make the Harre Union a great place for people," Ritter said.

He noted that numerous windows convey a large amount of natural light into the building, while also allowing people outside to see the activity taking place inside.

"We designed Harre Union to bring an abundance of natural light into the main corridors, which helps make those brighter places where students are comfortable gathering and hanging out, rather than simply walking through them," Ritter said.

"Another important design feature is the blurring of transition from interior to exterior through the use of full height glass, allowing building users to feel part of the campus landscape. The strategic location of important spaces and those windows showcase tremendous views of the [Center for the Arts](#), [Chapel of the Resurrection](#) and Christopher Center for Library and Information Resources."

Ritter said the Harre Union's interior design also reflects the desire for easy navigation, with its main north-south and east-west corridors allowing people to orient themselves quickly.

The Harre Union was dedicated on Jan. 31, completing a two-year, \$74 million project that is the largest construction project in campus history.