

Virginia Tech Innovation Campus
Academic Building One

Shaping the Future of Tech Education



Project Details

Project

Virginia Tech Innovation Campus
Academic Building One

Location

Arlington, VA

Architect

SmithGroup

Installing Contractors

ISEC, Inc. and
Commercial Interiors, Inc.

General Contractor

Whiting-Turner

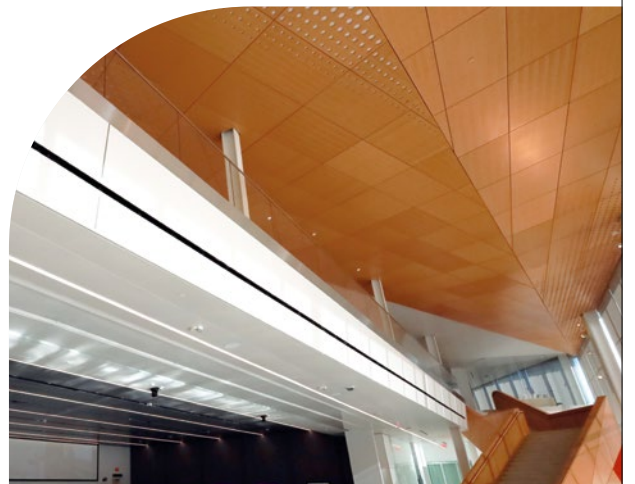
Products & Services

Custom WoodWorks® ACGI MicroPerf ceiling and wall panels
Custom MetalWorks™ Torsion Spring ceiling panels (*exterior and interior*)
Turf® acoustical backer
Turf® Slice acoustical ceiling tiles
InvisAcoustics™ ceiling panels
Suprafine® XL® suspension system
Prelude® XL® suspension system
Axiom® Classic perimeter trim
ProjectWorks® Design & Pre-Construction Services



The Vision

The lobby to Virginia Tech's Academic Building One would not only provide students, faculty, and guests with an entry to the facility. It would be a portal to possibilities. The ceiling and wall design would play an integral role, helping to articulate the grand lobby as the starting point for learning, exploration, collaboration, and innovation shaping the future of tech education.



The Challenge

High expectations were placed on Academic Building One. It would stand as a paragon of architectural design's ability to transcend boundaries to influence a campus and community. It was the first academic building on the Innovation Campus in Alexandria, supporting Virginia's \$1.1 million Tech Talent Investment Program and contributing to the bid to attract Amazon's second headquarters to the region. Plus, every aspect needed to exemplify the principles of sustainability, health and wellness, accessibility, connectivity, and integrated technology.



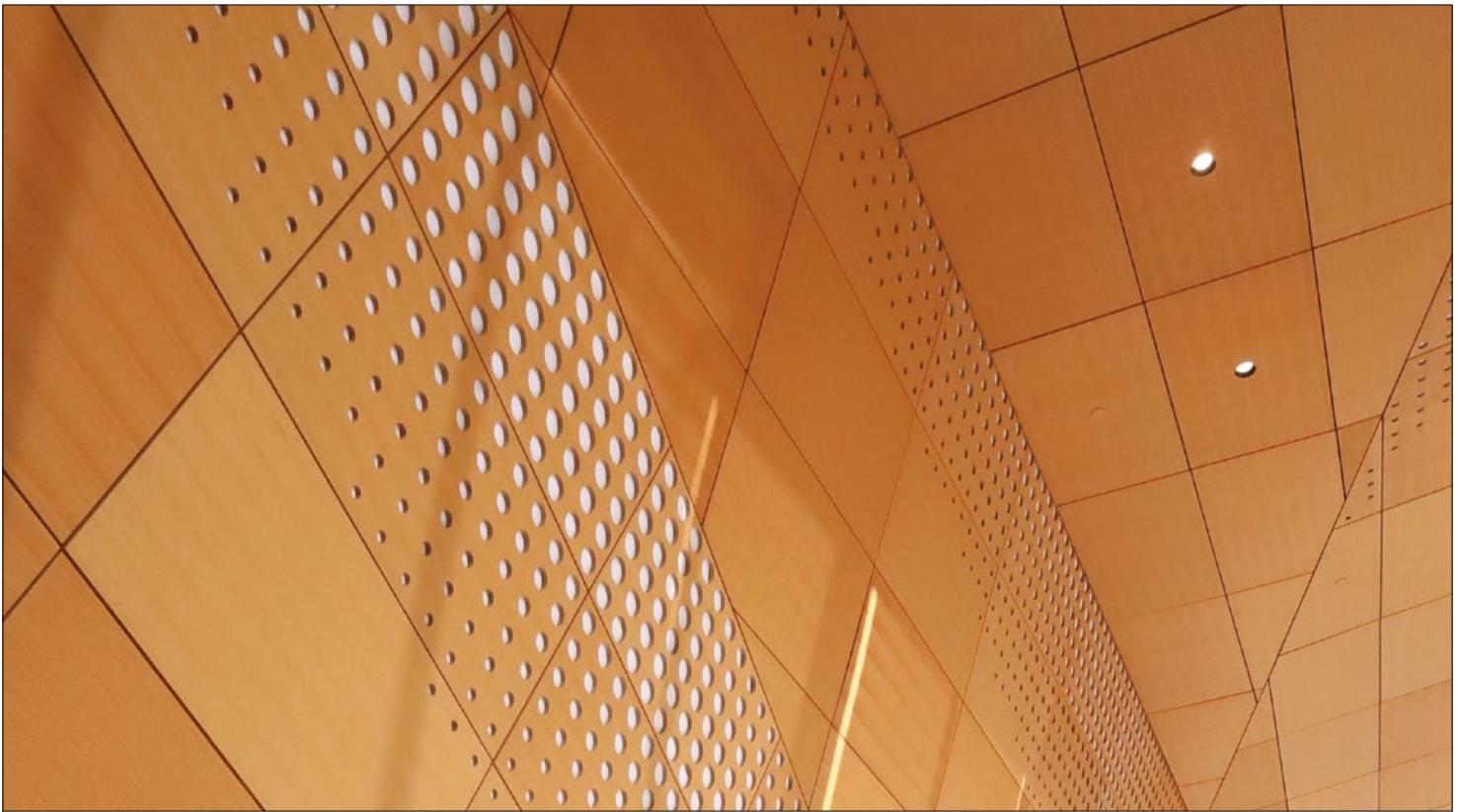
Bringing the outside in was the first step in ensuring the lobby ceiling and wall design delivered on these expectations. This meant referencing the heliomorphic façade, designed “to directly relate to the movement of the sun” and comprised of a faceted structure balancing onsite energy generation, energy efficiency, zoning requirements, daylighting, and occupant comfort. It was critical the folded geometry of building-integrated photovoltaic panels (used to generate energy) and the warmth of the terracotta fins (providing passive shading) were carried into the interior.

“Early collaboration and a commitment to learning what the materials could do and applying that knowledge brought a very complex design vision to life. The folded geometry and warm wood tones all feel very natural and intentional.”

Sven Shockey

Vice President/Design Director,
SmithGroup





To create additional cohesiveness inside and out, the exterior soffit and interior ceiling panels needed to work together to continue the geometry perfectly through a glass partition wall—not exactly an easy feat when accounting for light refraction, wood with natural variation, and geometric complexity.

Above the lobby Armstrong solutions can be seen distinguishing four floors of Academic Building One. This included but was not limited to Calla® and Ultima® acoustical panels, Turf® Slice acoustical panels, and MetalWorks™ ceilings, which were installed in the Boeing Auditorium, located just off the grand staircase.

Addressing Lobby Design Challenges

Acoustical performance needed to control noise in an open space with many hard surfaces. The 3,000-sq. ft. Boeing Auditorium also had the potential to contribute noise to the space while presenting a need for controlling sound outside the room.

Large-format ceilings challenged the teams to create a look that remained true to natural wood variation without creating a lot of “visual noise” that would disrupt the biophilic character of the space.

As strategies evolved for the design vision, the need for specialization emerged to achieve, fine reveals and seamless trim around columns.

The lobby’s look and feel needed to continue up the grand staircase and be carried through on additional floors.

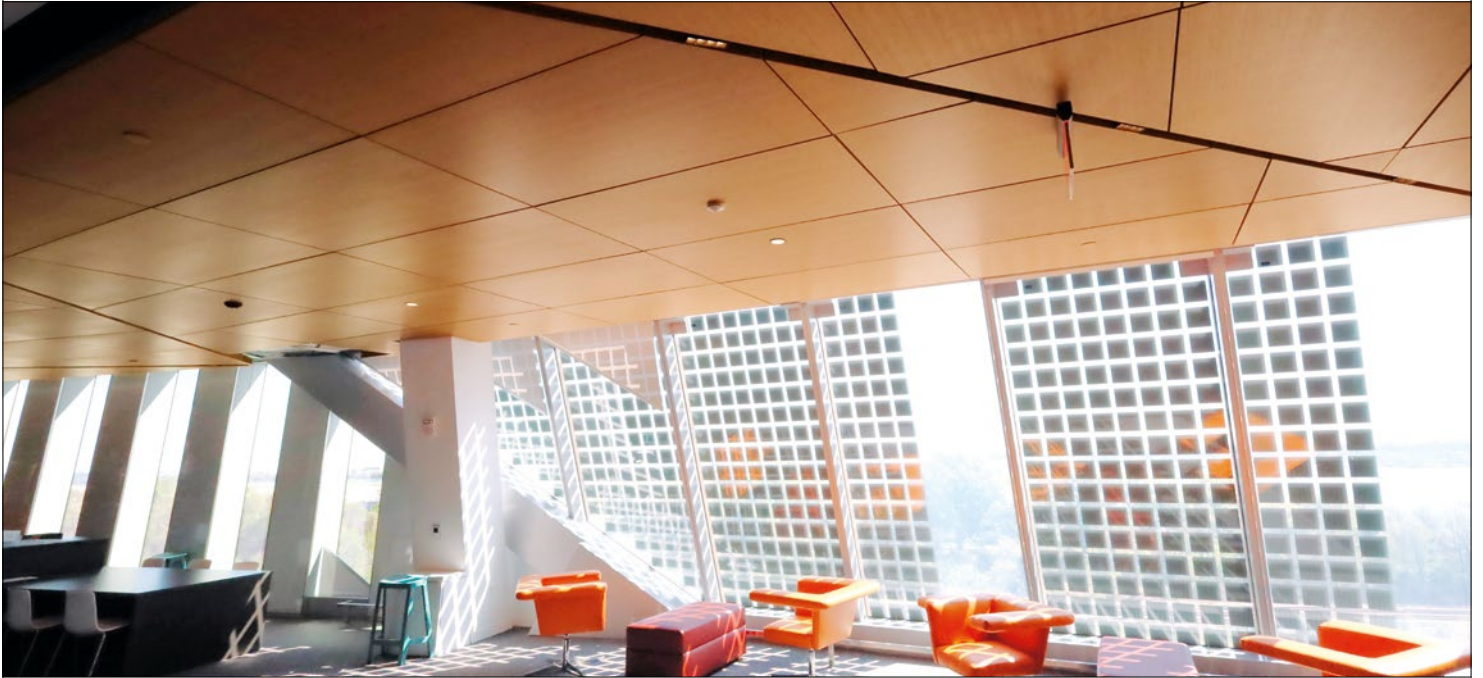
Project timing required multiple installations, such as the vestibule, glass and glazing, a stairway and more, to occur simultaneously with the walls and ceilings.

Academic Building One was constructed in a Mid-Atlantic climate that experiences sustained below-freezing temperatures as well as high heat and humidity for much of the year.



The Solution

One year after completion, Academic Building One was featured on CBS News' America ByDESIGN™. It also earned ISEC the 2026 Washington Building Congress Craftsman award for outstanding architectural millwork, with ISEC's deliveries anchored by the monumental stair and 7,500 ft.² of acoustical wood ceiling and feature wall. The Armstrong MetalWorks™ exterior soffits and highly customized ACGI WoodWorks® wall and ceiling solutions in and beyond the lobby played a notable role in both these recognitions.



Every day, the lobby provides a “wow” factor for new visitors. By delivering exceptionally well on the design intent, it also provides faculty, students, and researchers with a consistent experience of nature, serenity, discovery, and collaboration that supports Academic Building One as a hub of excellence in tech education and innovation.

The space is used heavily for events and even with the auditorium in full swing, the acoustical performance remains strong, striking the right balance of noise control while allowing enough sound energy to give the space a vibrancy befitting the home of future tech innovation.

“We wanted the design to emphasize key areas, assign a hierarchy to parts of the lobby, and provide another level of discovery for the visitor,” said Shockey. “Everything from the very large facets to the gradation of perforations bring this to life with little to no compromise on the design vision.”

Sven Shockey

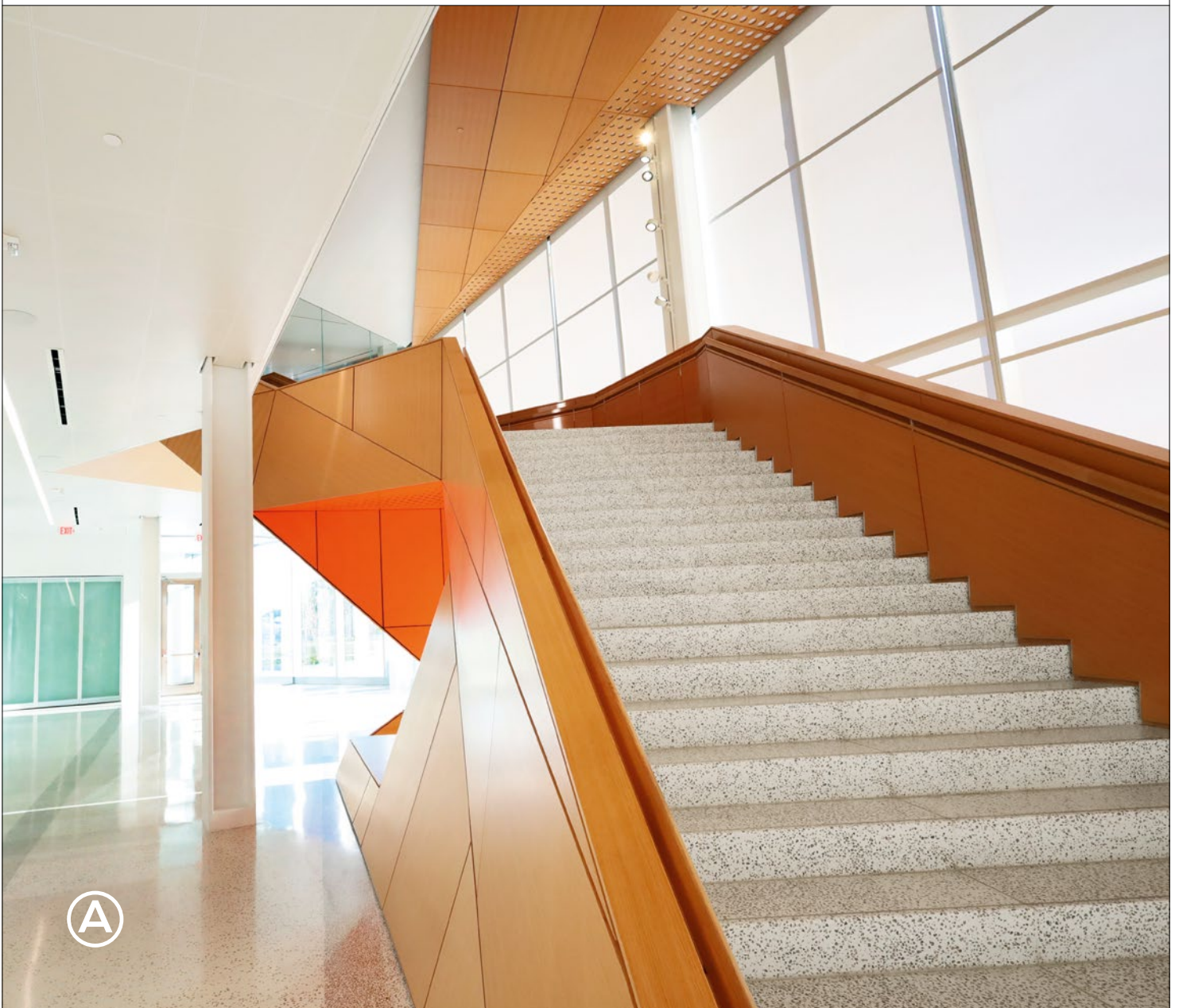
Vice President/Design Director,
SmithGroup



“Academic Building One has become a hub of Virginia Tech’s presence in the region, and the completed building reflects the vision we set out to achieve. From the moment you walk inside, the variety of collaborative spaces reinforces that this building was designed not just for learning, but for connection, innovation, and discovery.”

Dave Wilder

Sr. Director of DC Building
Operations, Virginia Tech



For the Armstrong team, one of the most fulfilling elements of the Virginia Tech project was being a partner in the material design and planning from the beginning, helping to define the products and process, and seeing it through to the end.

“We were in this from day zero, determining materials, layouts, sizes, facets, folds, customization— everything within the ceilings and walls,” said Darren Osenga, Armstrong WoodWorks® Product Line Manager.

“Being involved at this level is the really exciting part and reinforces that Armstrong is more than a product supplier. We are in the business of collaborating on a design and bringing it to life.”

Other project teams echoed the high level of satisfaction resulting from start-to-finish collaboration across the board.

“We enjoyed the challenge of having to plan into the future to stay on top of all the details of such a robust, complicated design,” said Jacob Gordon, Project Manager, ISEC.



“Everyone at Armstrong was willing to jump in and support this project, address challenges and complexities, and help us all get out ahead as much as possible. Everyone took ownership of the project, making the installation smooth and the result something we are all very proud of.”

Jacob Gordon
Project Manager,
ISEC



Armstrong®
World Industries

America ByDESIGN™ is a trademark of MWC Media Pty Ltd.; All other trademarks used herein are the property of AWI Licensing LLC and/or its affiliates. © 2026 AWI Licensing LLC

Contact Us

Armstrong World Industries

2500 Columbia Ave
Lancaster, PA 17603

Phone

877-276-7876

Find Us On

