University of California - Irvine
One of the Greenest Universities in America

**UC Irvine:** One Of The Greenest Universities in America

**Project Name:** University of California at Irvine—Mesa Court Expansion

**Project Location:** Irvine, CA

**Project Size:** 935 sets

**Building Type:** Multi-use Residence Hall

**Project Team:** UCI, Hensel Phelps, Mithūn, DCI

**Product List:** Bunk and adjustable height bed, Desk with data port, Rolling pedestal, Stackable 2-drawer under-bed storage, Two-door wardrobe
Sustainability Backstory

UC Irvine opened its doors in 1965 as part of the University of California System and is distinguished as a Public Ivy.

Located in the town of Irvine, among the mountains, beaches, and attractions of Southern California, it offers 80 undergraduate degrees and 98 graduate and professional degrees to 31,551 students (25,256 Undergraduates & 6,295 Postgraduates).

Among colleges and universities in America, UCI is in the vanguard when it comes to sustainability and climate change in particular. You can read the University's first climate action/sustainability plan (2013) here.

In the ‘90s, UCI won a Nobel for work on atmospheric chemistry related to the formation and decomposition of ozone. In fact, Professor F. Sherwood Rowland’s Nobel Prize-winning research put UC Irvine at the forefront of climate change science.

And UCI was the first University in the United States to set up an Earth System Science Department. Here is how the department describes its mission:

> Understanding global environmental issues such as global warming, stratospheric ozone depletion, and worldwide air pollution requires the cooperation of scientists across many disciplines. Global change is projected to accelerate through the 21st century and will impact the ecosystems that preserve the habitability of the planet. The Department of Earth System Science (ESS) at the University of California, Irvine focuses on how the atmosphere, land, and oceans interact as a system, and how the Earth will change over a human lifetime.

UCI’s commitment to sustainability is well-recognized and celebrated. As one of Sierra Magazine’s Eco-Valedictorian’s, it was awarded the recognition of Greenest University two years in a row (2014 & 2015).

"UCI is especially good at managing its trash (more than 80 percent of campus waste is diverted from landfills), getting energy from clean sources, and encouraging students and employees to
step away from the car by offering train rebates, bus-pass discounts, and a free shuttle. In line with the UC system’s goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2025, UCI quadrupled its use of solar power in the past year, adding 11,700 panels in June to reduce its annual carbon emissions by 1,500 metric tons."

The Princeton Review included UCI in their 2017 Green Honor Roll as one of only 21 schools to receive the highest possible score of 99 according to their Green Ratings tally.

In 2014, the EPA honored UCI for exemplary climate leadership with its Climate Leadership Award:

"The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has recognized UC Irvine with the 2014 Climate Leadership Award for Organizational Leadership for reducing carbon pollution and addressing climate change. Eleven buildings on campus have earned a platinum rating through the U.S. Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program, while eight have achieved a gold rating."

The university also has embraced sustainability in its academic and student activities, with more than 200 faculty members conducting research and providing instruction that furthers understanding of the interconnectedness of social, economic and environmental issues. The campus offers a minor in global sustainability, and its Department of Earth System Science has earned a reputation as one of the most influential departments in the nation devoted to studying the Earth as a system."

Finally, the State of California recognized UCI’s Smart Labs initiative—which minimized energy waste in research labs by up to 60%—with its 2013 Green California Leadership Award. The designation, “acknowledges outstanding environmental achievements by cities, state agencies and other government entities in California.”

Case Study: UC Irvine
Mesa Court Expansion: A Leed Platinum Residence Hall

In 2015, DCI was contacted by the construction and design firm Hensel Phelps in partnership with the architectural firm Mithūn. UCI was building a new $92 million student life complex and the university’s first high rise residence hall.

With UCI’s peerless focus on sustainability, we naturally jumped at the chance to partner with the school. Our unique zero waste manufacturing process and our ability to deliver FSC-certified chain of custody hardwood furniture provided a compelling compliment to UCI’s commitment to green values.

The LEED Platinum targeted complex is called the Mesa Court Expansion, and it includes three six-floor buildings each housing 300 plus students. That translates to 269 student rooms or 935 student beds with a mix of triples and quads. Based on UCI’s sustainability commitment, the building has some key green features.

The design incorporates natural ventilation, daylight harvesting, active renewable energy systems and sustainable site strategies to achieve LEED Platinum certification and exceed California Title 24 energy requirements by 30%.

Process & Approach

Working With Space Constraints
We were invited to provide the team at UCI with a sample room of furniture. So the general contractor made a mock room—a shell—to match the specifications of what they were building. Originally UCI asked us to design a solution for triple rooms. When we presented it in the mock room, it gave everyone a clear sense that triples would work well.

Innovative Design Solution
We also developed novel solutions to add value by incorporating features based on our experience. For example, we added unrequested features that improved the solution including:

• A wardrobe shoe shelf
• A wardrobe mirror
• A wardrobe whiteboard
• A new drawer configuration: underbed stackables
• Three different desk options (design variations) and a rolling pedestal

**Student-Centric Creative Collaboration**

But more to the point, our solution catalyzed a creative process of design collaboration with a number of university stakeholders including housing, purchasing, capital projects, and maintenance.

Everyone weighed in on the solutions, but what tied it all together was the focus on a student-centric solution. That’s why, for example, everyone was so interested in adding drawer space.

**Maximizing Occupancy**

This led to another round of samples incorporating all the requests and changes. Then UCI asked whether they could add a 4th person to the room to further maximize space and occupancy.

So we went back to the drawing board and said yes it could happen. When we came back with a new design solution, everyone loved the new layout.

**Innovating Learning Environments**

This quad option allowed use to innovate even more. At the request of the University Design Team we incorporated charging outlets, data ports, and USB ports into the the top of the wardrobe.

This transformed the upper bunk into a function rich environment for the students. In an age of laptop driven learning, we strive to maximize non-traditional workspaces for the modern student.

On other wardrobes that weren’t attached to the bunk beds, we added upper storage cabinets to create more storage for the residents.
Managing A Surge In Enrollment

At some point in the process, the school increased their enrollment and in the end of June added another 100 beds thanks in large part to a novel quad solution.

The quad layout that we developed in collaboration with the design team helped UCI manage an unexpected surge in enrollment enabling them to convert more rooms to quads.

True to UCI's leadership in the field of sustainability, they made a unique and special choice when selecting their desks. They chose the most sustainable option for their desks and pedestals—solid maple.

Further bolstering the sustainability pedigree of the project, we assembled all of the wardrobes locally in California just 100 miles from Irvine.

And the icing on the cake? Our solution cost them far less than what they budgeted.

To set up an order today or to talk with one of our representatives, you can write to us here or call: (800) 552-8286.

You can also learn more about our industry-leading FSC CoC certification, our MAS certification, and our green materials sourcing, sustainable manufacturing, and our unique zero waste Vertical Integration Process (VIP).

Download the DCI Sustainability overview here.

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