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## NKU science building wins

### Architects reward design done by Lexington firm

BY HOWARD MCEWEN | ENQUIRER CONTRIBUTOR

The Kentucky Society of Architects, a chapter of the American Institute of Architects, has awarded NKU's Dorothy Westerman Herrmann Natural Science Center a Merit Award for Excellence in Architectural Design.

The \$38 million, 172,000-square-foot building was designed by Lexington's Omni Architects. The building houses the biology, chemistry, physics and geology departments.

The jury was comprised of four Los Angeles-based architects. On awarding the project, the jury wrote:

"We compliment this project for its clear plan and thoughtful siting. The playfulness of the eccentric elements and volumes contrasted with the highly ordered modules. This contrast created excitement yet grounded them in a building reminiscent of a large ark."

Janet D. Pike, executive vice president of AIA Kentucky, said the awards are "intended to showcase excellence in architectural design."

"The amount of time and effort that goes into designing and executing a project is enormous," said Catherine Marquardt, Omni's marketing manager. "Our first goal is to exceed the goals and aspirations of our clients, and when we receive recognition for our work, it only reaffirms our commitment to quality and our passion for the practice of architecture."

She added, "It's like studying for a test. Yes, you benefit from learning the information, but receiving the A really makes one feel like they've accomplished something big."

In designing the new building, Omni was challenged with working with the topography of the campus as well as the existing buildings designed in the Brutalist style - a style that uses large swaths of unadorned concrete on many building facades.

"NKU was conceived as a 'hilltop enclave' modeled after Italian hill towns, and includes numerous buildings that expressively use concrete as both a structural and finished material," said Marquardt. "Our job was to take the university's list of needs and goals, and turn them into a physical reality through our artistic vision and experience with buildings of this type."

Omni Architects has received other awards for projects including an AIA Kentucky Honor Award for the Center for Rural Health at UK, a 2005 Build Kentucky Award for the U of L Belknap Research Building, and a 2004 Design Award of Merit from the Kentuckiana Masonry Institute for ECU's Health Education Center.

Future Northern Kentucky projects include NKU's Student Union building, planetarium, and greenhouse as well as the Center for Manufacturing Competitiveness at the Gateway Community and Technical College, Boone campus.

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