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LAW SCHOOL NOTES

No longer the 'school over the drugstore'

John Marshall earns national acclaim for first-floor renovations on State Street

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Until 15 months ago, The John Marshall Law School did not have a ground-level presence at State Street and Jackson Boulevard.

Through a yearlong, \$7 million renovation project, the school's first floor was converted into a new student commons, cafeteria, bookstore and a place for future classrooms. In addition, the main entrance was placed on State Street.

"The environment is completely different and uplifting and exciting and progressive," said Thomas Samuels, principal at Thomas Samuels Enterprises, who served as the renovation project manager.

"It's all the things you'd want it to be. It has such an impact on the school's brand, how the students feel about themselves and everything associated with the school."

John Marshall's renovation is one of 80 projects that will be featured this month as part of the American School & University Educational Interiors Showcase.

Included in the American School & University magazine, the show-

case gives school and university architecture projects professional acclaim and national exposure.

The law school has owned the property at Jackson and State since 1979, occupying the top 11 floors since the 1980s. The law school would rent the first floor space to retail tenants.

With an enrollment of more than 1,600 students in 2011, the law school decided it needed additional space and began renovations.

"One of the great things it did was take a space the school already had and repurposed it for a very student-centric view where the city can see what the school has to showcase," said Michael Taylor of Griskelis Young Harrell, an architectural firm.

Taylor, who served as the architect for the renovation, said the application to be featured in the magazine was submitted last year and he was notified of the inclusion in June.

John E. Corkery, the law school's dean, said he has a "vivid recollection of what that space looked like before the changes."

"In some sense, we were the law school over the drugstore for a while," he said, referring to one of



John E. Corkery

the space's long-term tenants. "And now, we have a vivid, dynamic-looking presence on State Street."

A specially designed glass-and-steel staircase beside the lobby gives students access to the student lounge on the second floor.

"It helps with the flow of the people from the first floor to the second floor and the second floor to the first floor," Corkery said. "It takes off some of the pressure on our elevators."

The renovated area also provides additional room for large group meetings, Corkery said.

"It presents a very open space where students can talk, get together and have a little lunch and watch television," he said. "And I think they really like it."

Corkery doesn't think the school has received an interior design award like this before.

The renovation, which was completed last year, was judged in the interior renovation category, one of the seven such categories.

"It was a really multifaceted project," Taylor said. "We put it in that

category because it doesn't fit into any other category and it's a good example of going from a retail space into a student commons area."

Upgrading the first floor gave John Marshall a grand entrance onto the South Loop Education Corridor and greatly improved its student-centered space, Samuels said.

"This educational campus is really seen as the anchor of South State Street," Samuels said.

The project converted more than 3,600 square feet of retail space. The new entrance is set off by a glass canopy and students walk into an expansive entryway.

"You see this bright, transparent interior that is occupied by students and faculty," Samuels said. "They become part of the urban scene. The inside contributes so much to the outside."

Taylor said the renovation creates a "showcase effect onto State Street."

"Potential students can see how the students interact and so can potential employers," he said. "You really feel the presence of the street, but you don't have to hear the noise or smell the bus fumes. It's the best of both worlds."

A full list of all the project winners can be viewed at school-designs.com/Educational-Interiors-Showcase.aspx.

Previous inclusions in American School & University Educational Interiors Showcase were the University of Chicago Law School's renovation of its six-floor library tower, featured in 2010, and Northwestern University School of Law's smart classroom renovations, featured in 2008.

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