



Students and visitors gather at Thrive Coffee Roastery & Café, a micro coffee roastery, café and meeting spot. Floor-to-ceiling glass windows encourage visitors to come in and see the activity in the Culinary Science Center.



Hey Day Market sits next to the Tony & Libba Rane Culinary Science Center at Auburn University, Auburn, Ala.

FE&S Facility Design Project of the Year

Tony & Libba Rane Culinary Science Center at Auburn University

About the Project

Opened: Summer 2022

Scope of project: A project for the Horst Schulze School of Hospitality Management that includes an academic office space, classrooms, laboratories and multiple commercial offerings

Size: 142,000 sq. ft., 6-story complex

- **1856 — Culinary Residence:** 3,800 sq. ft.
- **Culinary and pastry labs:** 5,800 sq. ft.
- **Wine tasting and distilled spirits labs:** 12,500 sq. ft.
- **Hey Day Market:** 6,900 sq. ft.

Seats:

- **1856 — Culinary Residence:** 48 seats with 9 tables, plus 14-person private dining room
- **Hey Day Market:** 108 indoors, 36 outdoors
- **New Realm Brewing Company:** 13 seats (25 max occupancy)

Average check:

- **1856 — Culinary Residence:** \$110 for tasting menu; wine pairing \$90 additional
- **Staff:** 300 in 3 buildings, including 25 for 1856 — Culinary Residence

Total project cost: \$110 million

Equipment investment: \$3.4 million

Website: ranecenter.auburn.edu

Key Players

Owner: Auburn University

- **Dean, College of Human Sciences:** Susan Hubbard, Ed.D.
- **Department head, Horst Schulze School of Hospitality Management:** Martin O'Neill, Ph.D.

Commercial operations:

- Ithaka Hospitality Partners
- **CEO:** Hans van der Reijden
- **Managing partner, room & spa operations:** Paul Reggio
- **Managing partner, food & beverage:** Adam Keeshan
- **Managing partner, culinary operations:** Leonardo Maurelli III
- **Chef de cuisine, 1856 — Culinary Residence:** Thomas Baco-Wang
- **Chef in residence, 1856 — Culinary Residence:** Ford Fry
- **General manager, The Laurel Hotel & Spa:** Josh Head
- **Spa director, The Laurel Hotel & Spa:** Chandra Perry
- **Executive chef:** Amanda Trawick

Mentor and advisor: Horst Schulze, co-founder of The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, School of Hospitality Management benefactor and Ithaka Hospitality Partners executive advisor

Architect: Cooper Carry, Atlanta: Brian Campa, AIA, LEED AP, principal, design director; Chrissy Perez, NCARB, LEED AP, project manager

Interior design: The Johnson Studio, a division of Cooper Carry, Atlanta

Foodservice consultants: Ricca Design Studios, Greenwood Village, Colo.: Phillip Landgraf, FCSI, executive principal; Garret Sletten, principal, project director

Culinary consultant: Lawrence McFadden, CMC, ECM

Equipment dealer: Mobile Fixture & Equipment Co., Mobile, Ala.

Construction: Bailey-Harris Construction Co., Auburn, Ala.

FE&S appreciates the following professionals for generously contributing their time to judge this year's competition:

Bill Davis, regional sales manager, Edward Don & Co., Woodridge, Ill.

Stuart Davis, principal, Stuart Davis Design, Park Ridge, Ill.

Beth Kuczera, president, Equipment Dynamics Inc., Chicago

Chris Wair, design principal, Reitano Design Group, Indianapolis

Editor's Note: Facility Design projects featured each month become eligible for the Facility Design Project of the Year competition. If you would like to submit a project for consideration, please contact Joe Carbonara at joe@zoombagroup.com.



The wine and distilled spirits classroom sits above 1856 – Culinary Residence.

Why It Won: The Judges' Comments

- Overall, it is rare to see a university develop a facility like this that can rival traditional, big-name culinary schools. The school is making its mark as a culinary destination at a high level. The proof is in the high-level accreditations the facility received and the fact that students from this program are quickly employed.
- The project is well funded and well-thought-out and executed. The project team put in a lot of time and effort studying this project, and it shows by how thoroughly the project met its solid objectives. Auburn studied, evaluated, and thought of everything. The Ritz-Carlton influence is apparent.
- The fact that this student-run LEED Silver facility earned AAA Five Diamond designation for The Laurel Hotel & Spa is impressive, as is the way the hospitality program integrates with student education.
- Students are exposed to all sorts of different cooking techniques. The restaurant's yearly chef-in-residence program helps expand students' educational experience.
- The green initiatives are strong, including the closed-loop chilled water system.
- The rooftop run by horticulture students is a biosphere idea and very impressive.
- The center integrates with the neighborhood.
- The front-of-the-house and back-of-the-house interaction is good.
- The teaching space very well emulates a restaurant space.
- The suite and kitchen setups are really good. The restaurant's beautiful design merges the kitchen and dining room.

Tony & Libba Rane Culinary Science Center

The Tony & Libba Rane Culinary Science Center (RCSC) brings all components of hospitality management education together under one roof at Auburn University in Auburn, Ala. It houses The Horst Schulze School of Hospitality Management (HOSP) and collaborates with Ithaca Hospitality Partners. Along with a strong focus on the premium service segment, this combination strategically positions HOSP to offer students a differentiated learning experience.

Here, an overview of the different spaces in the facility:

1856 — Culinary Residence: 1856 is a teaching restaurant that serves an a la carte lunch and a tasting menu for dinner. Students receive hands-on experience in both front- and back-of-the-house roles. An open kitchen allows guests to watch students prepare their food.

Thrive Coffee Roastery & Café: Thrive is a micro coffee roastery, cafe and meeting spot.

Educational laboratories: Each laboratory focuses on a specific hospitality management area, such as culinary, pastry, catering and food styling. The Culinary Science program attracts students pursuing careers in the commercial and non-commercial food production and service industry.

Wine and distilled spirits and microbrewing laboratory classrooms:

These laboratories combine with culinary science and beverage study for wine, liquor and beer education. The two-story wine room connects the restaurant below with the wine appreciation laboratory above.

Hey Day Market: This food hall features vendors serving menu items to the community. Current platforms include a bar, pizza, a soon-to-be foodservice incubator space, a burger grill, salad, noodles, a deli, tacos, gelato and poke.

The Laurel Hotel & Spa: This ultra-luxury 32-key boutique hotel and spa provides a place to stay for guests while giving hospitality management students hands-on experience. A large, fully self-contained room service kitchen sits on the main level above the culinary center in the hotel lobby.

Walt and Ginger Woltoz Roof Terrace: The rooftop splits into public spaces and hotel/residence amenity spaces. The public side is a rooftop lounge as well as a rooftop garden managed by the Auburn University Department of Horticulture, where students and faculty continuously tend and maintain edible herbs, fruits and vegetables for use in 1856 — Culinary Residence. The garden receives organic waste from the kitchen to use in composting.

New Realm Brewing Company: This state-of-the-art, open-concept, micro-teaching brewery, tasting room and microbiology laboratory provides brewing science and hospitality management students a hands-on learning environment.





Above: Culinary Laboratory 1 contains two 20-quart mixers, two food processors, two blenders, two slicers, an induction cooker and a vacuum packing machine. A combi oven sits at the end of one of the dual cooking suites. Each cooking suite contains a six-burner range along with a chargrill, dual fryers, a flattop griddle, a plancha and a pasta cooker.



Left: The pastry laboratory contains a 20-quart and a 40-quart mixer, a 20-quart tilting kettle, a two-burner range, a double hydrovection oven, a rotating rack oven, a proofer/retarder, a blast chiller, roll-in freezer and roll-in refrigerator and induction cooker.

The Project's Purpose and Highlights

The vision for a unique culinary science center at Auburn traces back some 20 years with multiple people at the table, including academic and hospitality industry leaders. Auburn University College of Human Sciences leaders dreamed of and established a

vision in collaboration with industry leaders such as Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company co-founder and former president Horst Schulze and founder and CEO of Ithaka Hospitality Partners Hans van der Reijden.

"I made many trips with a team of leaders to globally recognized hospitality management programs and

facilities around the world, including South Africa, Europe, Singapore, Australia and the United States, to discover what existed and what was needed," says Martin O'Neill, Ph.D., head of the Horst Schulze School of Hospitality Management at Auburn University. "We discovered that many programs and facilities had a teaching restaurant or an association with a management company that manages a hotel, but none had it all. We wanted a state-of-the-art, stand-alone education building that brings everything together and is designed to teach students in real-world scenarios."

Also taking many of these trips was van der Reijden, whose company oversees the commercial/retail foodservice facets of the center as well

FE&S Facility Design Project of the Year

Tony & Libba Rane Culinary Science Center
at Auburn University



1856 – Culinary Residence, a teaching restaurant, serves as a beacon for the university. It serves an a la carte lunch and a tasting menu for dinner.

focus on food and beverage studies at the Culinary Science Center, the public food hall and the boutique hotel. The use of glass emphasizes the importance of transparency at each teaching site. A rooftop garden run by horticulture students provides produce for the restaurant. The building's prominence and location on campus bring foot traffic from the public during football game days and campus tours designed to recruit students who want to see campus amenities.

Financial Aspects

The project was a partnership between private funding and university funding. Many areas in the building sought to create revenue for the school and building. For example, the large retail food hall and the bakery/pastry program can commercially sell to the rest of campus or provide baked goods to other food and beverage programs. In addition, the project included sellable residences, rentable spaces in the hotel and spa and on the rooftop.

“The goal since the beginning of the project was to be a world-class prototype facility that has all the equipment it would need to produce a world-class culinary and hospitality program,” says Landgraf. “We didn’t have an open checkbook. We were still tasked to stay within budget with the rest of the design. We understood that this facility would be world-class — and potentially recruit the best talent, chefs and professors — so we had to weigh a lot of decisions to spend money in the right places. A lot of the foodservice equipment choices were made to be functional and long-lasting but still offer a great high-end experience to the level of patron and student satisfaction for the facility. In the end, it ended up being a well-balanced project with high-quality equipment and more economical restaurant-grade equipment.”

“It’s important to note that the project was designed between 2018 and 2020, and the final

as The Laurel Hotel & Spa at Auburn University and Dixon Conference Center, which is adjacent to the Rane Center. The university oversees the academic and culinary labs. “We wanted to go beyond what currently exists in hospitality management education,” van der Reijden says. He has a close alliance with Horst Schulze, having worked as an executive at The Ritz-Carlton Company for 11 years before becoming a partner in Capella Hotel Group.

After the decision was made to move ahead with the Tony & Libba Rane Culinary Science Center, Cooper Carry architects in Atlanta joined the project team. “The mission of Auburn University with this project is to put practical knowledge into the hands of those who can use it, create economic opportunities and improve the quality of our lives,” says Brian Campa, AIA, LEED AP, principal, design director. “The mission also was to shine a light on Auburn and Alabama as an incubator of world-class

hospitality talent, to seamlessly blend the academic/hospitality spaces to create an environment that is both educational and memorable for patrons, and to provide world-class hands-on learning to students in the culinary and hospitality industries.”

The architects brought in Phillip Landgraf, FCSI, executive principal, and Garret Sletten, principal, project director, from Ricca Design Studios, Greenwood Village, Colo., as foodservice design consultants on the project. “Having multiple parties involved in the design of this facility allowed for a wide range of stakeholders and expert input,” Landgraf says. “Each of the elements within the RCSC is geared toward educating future hospitality leaders as well as providing amazing service to the Auburn community. The ultramodern elements in the RCSC create one of the most immersive and unique learning environments the state — and even the country — has ever seen.”

Students in the Horst Schulze School of Hospitality Management

for-construction documents were released for bid February of 2020,” says Campa. That was unfortunately horrible timing as soon after, the COVID pandemic hit, which eventually caused a halt on bidding, construction, etc. When the project resumed, the cost of construction materials, equipment, furniture, etc., had all increased significantly, thus impacting the budget.

“During the large COVID price hikes, the project and construction team was asked to reduce the sizes of the hotel rooms and eliminate a few classrooms and spaces to keep the project in budget,” Campa says. “We were fortunate enough not to be asked to value-engineer anything out of the project for the culinary school, which makes sense since the goal of the school was to keep the same level of equipment to still offer a world-class program.

“In the end, the overall project bid still came in over budget,” Campa adds. “The project team spent about a year figuring out ways to cut or find efficiencies. The project team went to the board and pleaded their case. The project would not be the same if we eliminated that much scope. The board agreed and increased the budget to keep the project alive.”

Design Challenges and Resolutions

“We had and have multiple end users and a split between commercial (Hey Day Market, 1856, Laurel Hotel & Spa, New Realm Brewing Company) and academic (College of Human Sciences) interests,” O’Neill says. “Because this is the first truly mixed-use facility of its kind on AU’s campus, lots of end-user coordination meetings were required all through construction and post-occupancy.”

To address the needs of various stakeholders, extensive meetings were held. At the time of design, years before the facility opened, not all members or operators who would be

running the space were hired or on board. “We had to design to a standard for creating the right spaces, based on our knowledge, and still allow for a somewhat flexible design so that chefs and operators could fine-tune and tailor the space as they wanted after opening,” Landgraf says.

For each kitchen space, Landgraf and Sletten designed remote refrigeration for the walk-in coolers and routed those refrigeration lines through complex architecture and mechanical spaces. They coordinated with other utilities in ceilings and floors. They also had to fully extend the grease exhaust hoods from the kitchen all the way to the roof and make sure that was all coordinated to go through all floors above in a safe and well-placed manner. Coordination with the architecture and mechanical, electric and plumbing teams, along with the structural engineer, was critical.

Also, each space had very large pieces of cooking equipment, including a few with large cooking suites, so coordination during design for floor loading and utilities was critical. “During construction, understanding how large equipment was placed and sequenced so that it was installed before large glass walls and the doors was critical to getting the equipment successfully placed,” Landgraf says.

“We had to ensure that unique specialty equipment, utilities and systems supported the functions of the building,” Campa says. “We carried out space utilization studies to evaluate the use of each room based on the academic schedule. In addition, each space was designed to convert from specialty use, like wine appreciation, to general classroom presentations.”

Designing a rooftop garden and pool over a AAA Five Diamond Award-winning hotel/spa, classrooms, culinary labs, teaching restaurants and a cafe was a complex design challenge. “Complex coordination exercises facilitated the overlapping systems,

structure and support for each building level,” Campa says.

Also, Campa adds, teams had to ensure that specialty classrooms functioned well but could also be used for general academics.

Classic Design Principles

For the operations of this building, two parties are involved: Ithaca Hospitality runs the food hall with third-party local restaurant partners and retail platforms along with the hotel itself, and Auburn University operates the culinary spaces for the university. There is also a large commercial laundry center that handles items for both Ithaca and the university and also provides overflow laundry services for the hotel and Auburn University. Inside the kitchen spaces, the design team mimicked what it could so students could experience what it is like working in a real commercial kitchen. At the same time, the design had to have enough space so instructors could teach students in a classroom setting, working side by side with other students. Each cookline, prep space and finishing space was a hybrid design of classic kitchen layouts merged with a classroom-style open kitchen for professor visibility and ergonomics.

Progress

Since opening the facility, O’Neill reports undergraduate numbers at the university have increased dramatically, noting “we will most likely hit our anticipated cap in the next 18 months.”

Customer responses have been exceptional. Simply put, O’Neill says they love it. “They love the ability to interact with students and faculty in the very real-time learning environment that the center is,” he says. “They love everything from wining and dining to student- and faculty-led tours to simply hanging out on weekends at our community table or on the green space outdoors.”