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Merryl and Sam Israel Jr. Environmental Sciences Building, Tulane University

Wilson Architects/Payette Associates Inc., Boston; Wilson Studio at Payette, programming and concept design; Wilson Architects, building design; William Wilson, principal-in-charge; Kevin Sullivan, programming architect; Matthew Leslie, project manager; Chris Martin and Mark Reed, project architects; Jim Moses, Michael Hinchliffe, Whitney Whinnery, Wendy Cote, Steve Starkie

PROJECT TYPE This building houses two floors of research labs, two floors of undergraduate instructional science labs, faculty offices and conference rooms. In an unusual strategy, the research floors are sandwiched between the classroom levels, promoting interaction between different building occupants.

PREVIOUS USE The site was open, at the end of the long vista from Gibson Hall, just in front of Percival Stern, a much-unloved campus science building from the 1960s. The new building now completes the front campus, bordering the academic quad and minimizing views of Stern.

BEST ARCHITECTURAL FEATURE This is a

thin building in which the designers successfully strove to create interior transparency. Thus, even when occupying space on the Stern side of the building, you can see through to the sunny, verdant front quad to the south from each floor.

LEAST SUCCESSFUL ELEMENT This building creates an austere but pleasant, shaded palm court between it and Percival Stern. There are open-air bridges intended to draw occupants out of the brutal, fortresslike older building. However, the main entrance stair to the Israel building, connecting to the upper floors and the bridges, faces away from the campus's main pedestrian walkway along the build-

ing's east side, discouraging use.

In addition to the new courtyard, a sunny outdoor space has been designed for use during the cool months. Incorporating seating, a fountain and areas dedicated to native Louisiana plants, this space is named the J. Bennett Johnston Quadrangle. From the quad, the new tan brick and glass facade forms a strong backdrop, and from a distance, the metal mechanical penthouse and the tall, streamlined exhaust fans on the roof indicate the building's highly technical function.

The Israel Environmental Sciences Building is a state-of-the-art educational facility. Funded in part by a \$10 million



Opposite page: Tulane's environmental sciences building (foreground) adjoins Percival Stern, an older science building, behind it. Exhaust fans atop the "pent-house" indicate the building's technical function. This page, from top: Chemistry labs are bright and look out on the quadrangle; open-air bridges and stairs allow traffic between Stern (left) and Israel. On the ground floor, a courtyard softens the austere space.

federal grant, the building contains general chemistry labs on the ground floor and organic chemistry labs on its top floor. Organic chemistry, the bane of premed students everywhere, occupies a particularly inspiring space: full of daylight and custom-designed maple casework with frankly exposed environmental-support systems. The designers, William Wilson Associated Architects, a Boston firm spun off from Payette Associates Inc., have extensive experience with university science buildings. Here they have put Tulane on par with the best. "There are no better instructional labs anywhere in the nation," says chemistry professor Gary McPherson.

In addition to its unique mix of uses, the building embodies some principles of sustainable design: architecture that is responsive to environmental concerns. Among these are the traditional elements of New Orleans architecture — the courtyard and shading systems for the large, aluminum-framed windows. Other elements of sustainable design are more high-tech, involving electric lighting controls and a sophisticated mechanical system. In another New Orleans gesture, the building sports ceiling fans, indoors and out, and uses common beaded board as a low-impact exterior material in selected locations. →

