

Rockfon® SpanAir® ceiling system delivers “wow factor” at Florida’s Manatee Technical Institute

Serving nearly 1,000 students in Florida’s Sarasota/Bradenton area, the new Manatee Technical Institute (MTI) Main Campus building represents a modern, high-tech training facility to meet the workforce needs of the 21st Century. Designed with the latest energy-efficient construction and teaching technologies, this facility compares with surrounding universities in quality and features.

The school’s multi-purpose lobby is its main feature, serving as a 700-person reception area or reconfigured as a 400-seat dining hall. The two-story space directs the eye upward to a sloped, curved ceiling created using ROCKFON’s products. Acousti Engineering Company of Florida installed approximately 27,000 square feet of SpanAir metal ceiling panels.

Located at 6305 State Road 70 East in Bradenton, Florida, the two-story, state-of-the-art \$44 million facility boasts 210,000 square feet of space. More than 50 career technical programs are taught here, including architecture and construction, manufacturing, automotive collision repair, digital video production, culinary arts and more. Previously, many of these programs were offered at the original campus (now designated as West Campus), which opened its doors in 1963.

The 50-year-old Manatee Technical Institute is a post-secondary adult, career and technical education center. Today, MTI’s four campuses span 321,067 square feet and enroll nearly 2,000 students. The alumni have won more SkillsUSA medals than any other school in the nation for the past nine years.

MTI broke ground on the Main Campus project in March 2011, although it was 15 years prior that architectural firm Fawley|Bryant developed the school’s Master Plan. “During the course of developing that Master Plan the seeds were sown for a new campus,” explains Fawley|Bryant’s director of interior design, Sarah Colandro, ASID, LEED® AP ID+C.

Realizing the potential and value MTI has for the community, the district in 2003 committed to creating a new MTI “state-of-the-art, globally recognized campus” and through a competitive interview process hired the team of Fawley|Bryant and internationally-known architects Hellmuth Obata Kassabaum (HOK) to design the new MTI.

Designed to Impress

Dr. Mary Cantrell, director of MTI, could not contain her enthusiasm for the new Main Campus building. She was quoted in the Herald Tribune saying, “It’s so beautiful, it takes your breath away. ... Here everything is designed the way it should be.”

“The open space that awaits guests when they first walk into the building and look slightly left is meant to induce the ‘wow’ factor. Creating a space of unique grandeur was a key element for the architect and general contractor,” explains Jackie Drake, ASID, IIDA. As a licensed interior designer with Acousti, Drake worked closely with the design team and ROCKFON’s team to bring this impressive vision to reality.

“It’s a massive space. Fawley|Bryant was able to bring it to the next level. They chose a metal ceiling system to maximize the height of the lobby space, follow the curve of the roofline and complement the overall, modern look of the building,” adds Drake.

She continues, “Acousti, the ceiling subcontractor, took the aesthetic and functional intent of the architect, and the budget of the general contractor to provide this technical institute with a lobby ceiling system to fulfill all needs. Vaulting up past the second floor, challenges were encountered with the difficult angles. The installation team consisted of true artisans. [These] products were able to encompass all of the project’s requirements; providing a custom fit at a good value.”

Scheduled for Success

In addition to the physical challenges, Drake notes, “Time is always a factor in construction and this held true during the interior construction of this project as well.” The Main Campus building construction was completed in 18 months. Having solid relationships and clear communications between the building team members can make a difference in meeting critical deadlines during fast-paced construction schedules.

“Kudos to the general contractor, The Beck Group, for bringing this team together during the preliminary steps of the project. Thanks to Acousti’s strong relationship with Beck, we had an open door policy for communication,” praises Drake. “Because of this relationship and early involvement, the process was less stressful for everyone and contributed to a positive, helpful attitude. Beck listened to our recommendations for fitting within the budget and maintaining the design intent. The end result was a super-pretty space that met the client’s needs.”

One of Acousti’s trusted partners, Jason Wisniewski, works as a manufacturer’s architectural representative with Architectural Products, LLP and of ROCKFON’s products. “We were involved with the project for more than a year, from the early stages of design through to completion. SpanAir products offered a competitive

advantage that met all of the client's needs."

Drake agrees and offers additional compliments. Fawley|Bryant "creates such wonderful designs and has many projects on their plate. [ROCKFON's team] understood their design and how to make it work. They didn't need to worry about anything; they just needed to approve it."

Smooth Installation, Sound Performance

"This project went perfectly smoothly – from the cooperative relationship with have [ROCKFON's] engineering department through the installation on site. It was a great project, very successful," says Carl Needham, Acousti's associate manager.

Contributing to the project's success, Acousti relied on SpanAir Hook-in and Hook-on Planks. These metal ceiling panels provide large-scale concealed metal panels that are easy installed into conventional, exposed suspension systems. These planks seamlessly integrate with lighting, security, air, fire and audio systems. They easily can be removed for plenum access during maintenance or replaced for future renovation needs.

The SpanAir system accommodates either flat or wave designs by using custom and perimeter trim components. EZ Hook-in™ (patent pending) tabs on each plank nest into notched 1-3/8-inch main tee, providing downward accessibility without tools. The planks' square edge design with perimeter gasket on two sides ensures proper alignment, convenient removal and vibration dampening.

"Along with anti-vibration, acoustical enhancement is a cinch with SpanAir's variety of perforation designs and the Acoutex™ backer," states Doug Bernard, ROCKFON's regional sales manager in the southern U.S. and Caribbean. "It's a very large space designed to meet numerous functions and sound performance was important."

Drake reiterates this: "The space itself is very voluminous and its flooring is poured terrazzo. I always ask about the whole building

envelope because these materials can make a difference. In this big open space, the terrazzo flooring was a potential concern for reverberation. By perforating the metal ceiling panels and adding an acoustic backer, we helped improve the sound quality."

Sustainability Goals

Supporting design flexibility, ROCKFON manufacturers SpanAir metal ceiling panels in a wide range of widths and lengths, solid or perforated designs, and finish options are available. Supporting to project's environmental goals, ROCKFON offers factory-applied powder-coated paints and finishes with no volatile organic compounds (VOCs). For MTI, a standard Satin Silver finish was selected, enhancing the high-tech styling and accentuating the metallic look.

The metal comprising SpanAir planks contain 100% recycled aluminum content. Like the finishes, the aluminum does not contain organic compounds, which mitigates mold and microbial growth. These attributes not only are appropriate for Florida's humid climate, but also contribute to MTI's sustainability goals, which are guided by the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED Rating System. At the end of the ceiling system's useful life, it is 100% locally recyclable.

For MTI's design and building team, economic sustainability goals were as important as environmental sustainability goals. The SpanAir ceiling systems complies with the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, section 1605, Buy American Provisions.

Top-Priority

Along with supporting products made in the U.S.A., buying domestically helped MTI save labor, time and associated costs, according to Drake. "In researching solutions to create MTI's curved, vaulted ceiling, we learned that even if a company may be headquartered in the U.S. they may still go to Europe for their specialty products."



Ideal for corridors, Rockfon SpanAir Hook-in and Hook-on Planks seamlessly integrate with lighting, security, air, fire and audio systems.



Manatee Technical Institute's ceiling system maximizes the height of the lobby space, follows the curve of the roof line and complements the overall, modern look of the building.

She elaborates, "Not only does purchasing through them support a U.S. company, it shortens the lead-time substantially – about half of the time that their competitors were suggesting. [ROCKFON's team] helped expedite the whole process. We didn't wait more than 10 days for the shop drawings, when sometimes they can take up to four weeks."

Drake attributes the accelerated timeframe to the manufacturer's early involvement, strong customer relationship and knowledgeable staff. "They knew the intent. They knew this was a top-priority project. As soon as we had the signal, they were ready to go. It was 'Game on! Let's get it done.' [They] knew how to do it right. It was a no-brainer."

"The project team worked diligently to make sure ever-changing program needs were met and that the spaces could be converted as technology and curriculum for these important programs evolve," said Jane Dreger, director of Manatee County Schools Department of Construction Services (DCS).

DCS is responsible for the administration of the building construction program for Manatee County School District. This includes the new construction, renovation, and/or remodeling of

all educational facilities and ancillary spaces owned by the District. DCS is responsible for overseeing these capital projects from design to construction and closeout. The new Main Campus building was funded with \$4.5 million from a state Department of Education grant and the remainder was generated from a local sales tax.

Foundation for the Future

At the building's dedication event in February 2013, Cantrell told the Bradenton Herald, "The West Campus didn't meet 21st century standards... The students deserve a place that reflects how hard they are working."

With industry input, MTI provides training for adults in high-wage, high-demand careers. MTI also offers classes to adults seeking GED or to learn English, career training and high school completion opportunities, as well as continuing education and non-credit enrichment classes for the community's working population and retirees.

"This is more than a new building; this is a foundation for students," added John Ziemnicki, chair of the MTI Board of Governors and MTI Foundation.

"It's an absolutely stunning project," echoes Architectural Products' Wisniewski.

"The design of the new MTI Main Campus has been an intense and long process, and the dream of many people, including staff, students, community supporters and business partners," concludes Fawley|Bryant's executive vice president, Michael Bryant, LEED AP. "We have all worked together to create the kind of facility this community deserves and needs. This design is meant to attract your attention and have a presence that elevates MTI to its proper position as one of the most well respected technical schools in the country. As such, it will become one of the most significant economic drivers for future growth of Manatee County by providing the training of our current workforce and those of our future."



SpanAir Planks provide large-scale concealed metal panels that are easily installed into conventional, exposed suspension systems.

PROJECT	Manatee Technical Institute – Main Campus, Bradenton, Florida
OWNER	School District of Manatee County – Bradenton, Florida
ARCHITECT, INTERIOR DESIGNER	Fawley Bryant, Inc. – Sarasota, Florida
GENERAL CONTRACTOR	The Beck Group – Tampa, Florida
INSTALLING CONTRACTOR	Acousti Engineering Company of Florida – Venice, Florida
MANUFACTURER'S ARCHITECTURAL REPRESENTATIVE	Architectural Products, LLC – Ocala, Florida
ROCKFON PRODUCTS	Rockfon SpanAir® Hook-in and Hook-on Metal Plank Ceiling Panel Systems

Photo Credit: Mark Borosch Photography