



Courtesy Rice University



Top: Rendering of Machado-Silvetti's design for Wiess College at Rice. Above: Michael Graves' Martel College.

RICE TO ADD TWO NEW COLLEGES

WHEN RICE UNIVERSITY decided that it was time to add new residential colleges to its campus, it tapped two nationally known architectural firms for the job. Machado-Silvetti was chosen to come up with a replacement for the 1950 Wiess College, which has long been deemed to be failing structurally, while Michael Graves was selected to create the brand new Martel College (named after the Marian and Speros Martel Foundation, which gave \$15 million toward the building). While each of the colleges, which are now under construc-

tion, reflects the aesthetic of the firm behind it, they also pay homage to early ideas about the university.

The new Wiess and Martel colleges are conceived as low buildings with enclosed courtyards, more like student housing from before the 1950s than Rice's newer high-rise colleges. Martel features large round columns, reminiscent of adjacent Jones College (1957), a prominent circular stair tower, a sallyport (Rice's third), and a vaulted dining hall. At Wiess, a glass curtain wall was deflected around a tree that the architects deemed worth saving. Alas, a horticulturist thought otherwise, and in February the tree was bulldozed. Students have been assured that it will be replaced.

Administration dictates and student pressure toned down a few novel features of the new colleges. Rice requires all buildings to use its traditional St. Joe's brick, so more modern cladding materials such as the precast concrete Machado-Silvetti used in their recent dormitory at Princeton were not an option. More austere early designs for Wiess were softened in response to trustee comments.

Other compromises are clear only to those familiar with Rice. Each residential college has always had its own dining facilities, and though a study concluded that combined cafeterias would provide a better quality of food, students objected to the idea of mass dining out of fear that

it might weaken the community of each college. Thus the idea of combining dining halls was dropped in favor of sharing kitchens and serving lines between colleges, but keeping the dining rooms separate.

Similarly, students who lived at Wiess College treasured the fact that their rooms opened directly onto two grassy courtyards. The university, however, had been trying to place three locking doors between student rooms and the outside for security reasons. That standard will be met upstairs — where students will need to pass through locked doors on the stairways and elevators — but ground floor living rooms will open directly outside.

The two new colleges are part of an expansive building campaign at Rice. A new baseball stadium, by Jackson and Ryan, opened in February, and a new humanities building, by Alan Greenberg, is scheduled to open in time for the fall semester. Meanwhile, William Ward Watkin's 1925 chemistry building is being renovated as bioengineering labs, and the Fondren Library will be reworked by Robert Venturi and Shepley Bulfinch Richardson and Abbot. The library's original 1949 building will be partially gutted and a 1969 addition at the rear demolished to make way for a new section. A new business school building is also on the drawing boards. — *Christof Spieler*

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