

## “One Team, One Journey” Motto Drives UC San Diego Sulpizio Cardiovascular Center Project Success

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In April 2011, San Diegans gained their first and only dedicated cardiovascular center with research, programs and patient services all in one location. The culmination of

a seven-year project, the Sulpizio Cardiovascular Center was named for Richard and Maria (Gaby) Sulpizio, who bestowed a \$10 million dollar leadership gift on the University of California, San Diego. The University, with their strong academic cardiovascular program in mind, made the logical decision

to build the new Center across the freeway from the main UC San Diego campus. The \$230 million dollar building, attached to the existing Thornton Hospital in La Jolla, California, resulted from a level of successful teambuilding and rapport atypical of extended construction projects.



***University of California, San Diego Sulpizio Cardiovascular Center***

“We took the approach that this wasn’t a \$230 million dollar project, but a \$230 million dollar business,” explained Randy Leopold, UC San Diego’s Chief Architect. “It turned out to be an incredible experience for all involved.” Avoiding the isolating silos traditional to construction projects, the Center’s project team followed a very collaborative model. “We set up a board of directors – DPR Construction (the general contractor), the architect, the design consultant and a head sub-contractor – to give us direction.” To eliminate response lag time, project decision-makers worked together in the same trailer, on-site.

Leopold said the inclusive atmosphere embraced state-related agencies, such as OSHPD (Office of Statewide Health Planning & Development). “The structural engineers brought OSHPD in as a team member and they responded very positively. They beat their own timeframe! It’s the first time in my twenty years in the business that I’ve had project signoff early from them.”

Lisa Murphy, Administrator for the UC San Diego Sulpizio Cardiovascular Center, joined the project in 2005. Her enthusiasm was evident, “It didn’t feel like we were from several different companies because there was such a unified approach. I can’t imagine working on a project of that magnitude without the rapport we had – it was amazing.” Despite the economic downturn hitting in the project’s midst, progress was steady.

That’s not to say the project escaped challenges. For instance,

defective fireproofing material, discovered after the majority was installed, meant a complete re-do. But rather than finger-pointing and litigation threats, the team came together to solve the problem. Remarkably, no time was lost. Then the day they topped out the steel on the fourth floor, the decision came through that the Center needed more patient capacity. The result? A \$16 million dollar change order to transform intended office space into 27 patient rooms. Murphy explained, “Inpatient cardiovascular admissions had increased by 50% since 2005. Plus, the floor was already set up to follow OS-PhD electrical codes, so patient rooms really made better use of the space.” Again, the spirit of rapport carried the change, with no negative impact to contract schedule.

The resulting structure complemented the existing Thornton Hospital, yet had its own distinctive identity. Following the “Green Guide for Healthcare” meant elements like sun shading for the windows to allow generous natural light without excessive heat, a white, heat reflective roof, and low-flow fixtures where practical. “When we decided to go for LEED certification, we discovered it wasn’t going to be a huge deal to achieve LEED Silver, because of the original thoughtful, intelligent design plan,” Leopold said. “Most of the costs incurred were administrative, related to documentation gathering and submission.”

Designed with family in mind, all 54 larger-than-usual patient rooms are private – with 12 Cardiovascular Intensive Care beds and 42

progressive care beds. Focused on patient comfort, the patient doesn’t move as acuity changes; instead, the nursing ratio adjusts accordingly. Nursing stations are generously sized, while strategically placed, windowed workspace alcoves ensure nurses can chart while maintaining a line-of-sight to patients. The four-story Center also houses a new 21-room ED that services the entire medical campus.

When it came to architectural features, Murphy and Leopold each had their favorites. Murphy described the “bountiful healing natural light and warm colors in décor,” while Leopold loved “the way the building plays well with the existing hospital” and how interior textures mimicked those natural ones on the exterior.

The UC San Diego Sulpizio Cardiovascular Center opened its doors with a strong commitment to the greater community, both through patient care excellence and the positive economic impact of over 100 new jobs. Murphy applauded Randy Leopold, Mona Sonnenshein, COO, and Tom Jackiewicz, CEO, for their support and dedication to making the vision a reality. Both Leopold and Murphy lauded the values of trust and commitment that made it possible. The project teams’ “one team, one journey” philosophy is one embraced by the physicians, nurses and staff, as well. The hearts of the Greater San Diego community rest in good hands.

For more information about the UC San Diego Sulpizio Cardiovascular Center, visit <http://www.heartcenter.ucsd.edu>.

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