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Ankrom Moisan Associated Architects designs new campus of Oregon College

by Nathalie Weinstein



Ankrom Moisan Associated Architects' design of the Oregon College of Oriental Medicine's new campus applies an ancient aesthetic philosophy, feng shui, to a nearly 100-year-old building in Portland's Old Town/Chinatown neighborhood.

OCOM, founded in Portland in 1983, is one of the first Oriental medicine colleges in the country to offer master's and doctoral programs in acupuncture and Oriental medicine.

The college will move from its Southeast Portland location into the former Globe Hotel at Northwest Couch Street and First Avenue. The building, constructed in 1911, is four stories tall and contains 35,160 square feet of space. It will be seismically upgraded and fully restored with a 4,330-square-foot rooftop addition.

Ankrom Moisan's design was adjusted by a feng shui specialist to ensure the college receives positive qi, a Chinese word that describes the active energy forming part of any living thing.

"The director of OCOM hired Alex Stark from New York who reviewed the design documents," Ankrom Moisan principal-in-charge Jeff Hamilton said. "He looked at things like proximity to the river, bridges and parks, and he wrote up a report. We met with the college and our design team, and made changes to the drawing to make the design work better according to principles of feng shui."

The goal is for the renovation to be certified Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design gold. The rooftop addition will include decks, a green roof and an herb garden. The college facility will include classrooms and administrative offices, as well as an Oriental medical clinic on its fourth floor that will be open to the public six days a week. Active-use and retail spaces on the college's ground floor will create more viable retail space in the neighborhood. That was important to the Old Town Chinatown Neighborhood Association, Hamilton said.

"The neighborhood association was interested in the streetscape," he said. "They wanted retail and restaurants, and were interested in who would work on the ground floor of the building, as well as how the building would fit with the University of Oregon building and light-rail line."

General contractor SD Deacon is expected to begin construction on the renovation at the end of September.