BUILT ENVIRONMENT CASE STUDY

Columbia Business School: We Design for a Collaborative Academic Community

CHALLENGE

Cerami, part of Trinity Consultants, was chosen as the acoustic designers for the 492,000 square feet dual-building Columbia Business School.

SOLUTION

Using custom curtainwalls and interior glass partitions, our experts worked closely with the design team to develop tailored acoustical solutions for the higher ed space.

RESULT

We used exterior glazing to ensure proper interior noise levels were achieved to create a comfortable learning environment for the university students and faculty.

Located in the heart of West Harlem in Upper Manhattan, the new Columbia Business School is approximately 492,000 square feet and spans two buildings—the Henry R. Kravis Hall and David Geffen Hall. The two buildings are defined by interweaving student, faculty, and administrative spaces programmed with public spaces, creating a dynamic place for learning, teaching, and socializing. With such multifunctional programming, the school hopes to foster a sense of community and cultivate collaborative interaction between students, faculty, alumni, and practitioners.

SIGNATURE SOLUTION

Both buildings are constructed with a "layer-cake design," each utilizing custom curtainwalls and interior glass partitions to achieve a sense of openness and allow as much natural light into the space as possible. However, the site for the business school sits near the west side highway and elevated train lines, which poses many environmental noise challenges. It was imperative to mitigate noise impact from these external sources and recommend properly attenuated glass for the building's facade. Cerami's acoustical team conducted an extensive review of the exterior glazing to ensure proper interior noise levels were achieved and create a comfortable learning environment for the students.

The school's internal spaces are organized around intersecting networks of social and collaborative learning environments throughout the communicating stairs. To ensure proper sound separation between floors, Cerami's acoustical team worked closely with the design team to develop tailored acoustical designs for the programming. Furthermore, careful consideration was provided for the glass partitions in lecture halls to control acoustical separation and optimize interior room acoustics for maximized speech intelligibility.