

Fast-tracked project benefits from design-build approach

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photo credit: Josh Partee

A close design-build partnership is being credited for the successful completion of a fasttracked residence hall project at Pacific University in Forest Grove.

Mahlum Architects and Walsh Construction managed to complete the \$13.5 million, 61,500-square-foot Cascade Hall project in 13 months, much quicker than typical for a structure that size, Mahlum Principal Kurt Haapala said. The building opened recently, before students started fall classes.

"This was probably one of the most aggressive schedules we've had to address," he said. "We had to do this in half the time."

To meet the tight timeline, the Mahlum design team had to work extremely close with Walsh staffers and the owner's representative, Inici Group, Haapala said.

"It took a kind of partnership, all-hands-on-deck approach," he said. "It also required us to think differently about how we deliver our project."

Part of the process involved stationing Mahlum architect Joren Bass on the job site, Haapala said.

"The nuance is we really moved our design effort into the job trailer," he said. "We had to put one of our lead architects in the field before we finished schematic design ... It was kind of the secret ingredient. Our architect in the field had to make field decisions."

Haapala said having an on-site architect was so successful that he'd like the firm to apply the approach for other projects.

"There was this sense of pride of the project that transcended the typical lines between design and construction," he said. "It was a really rewarding process, so much that we're trying to learn from this process."