

# Three: TANGEMAN UNIVERSITY CENTER

## Cincinnati, Ohio

Gwathmey Siegel renovates a student union, mediating between old and new campus buildings outside and offering surprises inside.

By Jayne Merkel

**Architect:** Gwathmey Siegel & Associates Architects—Charles Gwathmey, FALA, principal; Robert Siegel, FALA, principal; Thomas Levering, ALA, associate partner; Gregory Karn, senior associate  
**Architect of record:** GBBN Architects—Joseph T. Schwab, ALA; Ted Christian, ALA  
**Client:** University of Cincinnati  
**Consultants:** Fosdick and Hilmer Consulting Engineers (m/e/p); THP Limited (structural); Hargreaves Associates (landscape); Hillmann DiBernardo Leiter & Castelli (lighting); David Harvey Associates (acoustical)  
**General contractor:** Reece-Campbell

**Size:** 180,000 square feet

**Cost:** \$38 million

**Completion date:** February 2003 (south wing); April 2004 (north wing)

### Sources

**Zinc paneling:** VM Zinc

**Built-up roofing:** Carlisle SynTec; Johns Manville, Atlas Roofing; Super Sky Products

**Windows:** EFCO; Graham Architectural Products, Timrek & Associates

**Doors:** Norwood Hardware & Supply; Ceco Door; Overhead Door; Chase Doors; Timrek & Associates

**Cafeteria furniture:** Allemuir; Sandler; Falcon; Landscape Forms; Epic

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The Tangeman University Center, a Modern, light-filled student center with a Federal Style facade, represents a change in direction for the University of Cincinnati's Signature Architecture program. In 1989, the school began bringing in high-profile architects to energize a hilly, 137-acre campus that, over time, had become disorganized and dominated by automobiles. The first new buildings—by Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves, and Henry N. Cobb—created distinct academic precincts. Then, as a campus plan by Hargreaves Associates was implemented, the emphasis shifted to coordination, linkages, and the creation of a “quality of campus life” that the university had lacked. The Janus-faced center creates a transition—both physically and stylistically—between a campus green surrounded by old Classical-style brick classroom buildings and bold new recreational facilities by Moore Ruble Yudell, Morphosis, and Bernard Tschumi.

### Program

Gwathmey Siegel was asked to renovate and enlarge a redbrick, colonnaded student union. Designed by Hake & Hake in 1935, it features a tower based on Philadelphia's Independence Hall. The building occupies a sloping site between a historic academic quadrangle and a football stadium built in 1912 on lower ground in



what is now the middle of campus. The school wanted the architect to maintain a continuity of image with the existing campus, bring natural light into the interiors, and expand the number and size of facilities. It aimed to preserve an 800-seat, multipurpose hall, restaurant, and game room, while adding facilities for food service, a campus bookstore, a 200-seat movie theater,

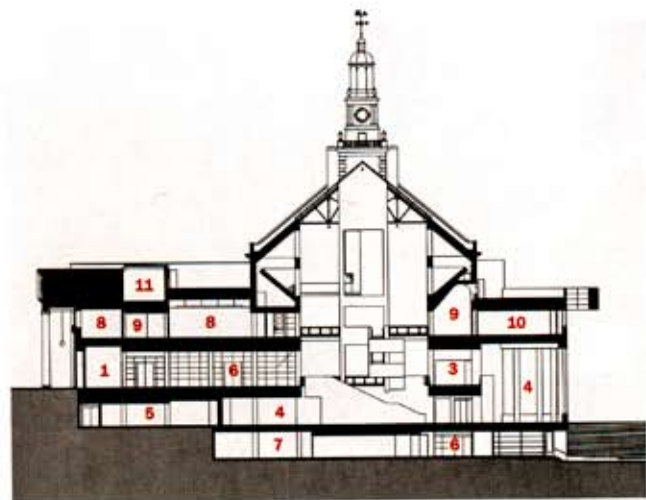
convenience store, credit union, conference rooms, and student lounges. The program also called for connections to a new visitors center, student services building, and Hargreaves's “MainStreet” corridor, which links academic areas and recreational facilities in an attempt to create a lively center of student activity.

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Gwathmey Siegel transformed a masonry-clad, 1930s student union by surrounding it with two wings clad in zinc panels typically used as roofing (opposite, top). With its central location on campus (opposite, bottom), the building (this page) acts as an aesthetic bridge between older, traditional structures to the west and new architecture to the east.







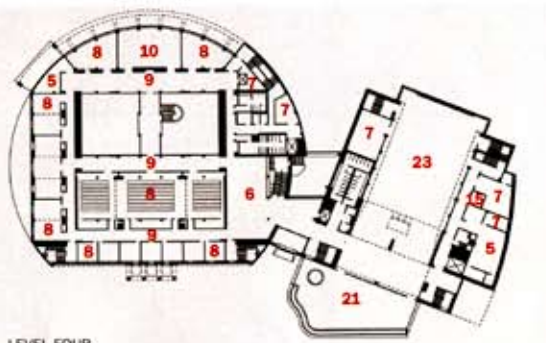
SECTION A-A

0 20 FT.  
6 M.

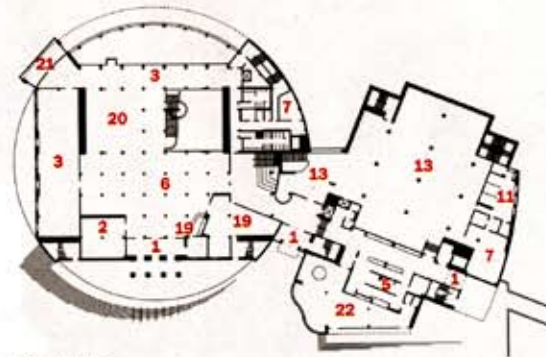


At the heart of the old student union building, Gwathmey Siegel cut through concrete floors, laid bare the steel structure, and inserted skylights into the roof to create an open atrium flooded by daylight. The architect

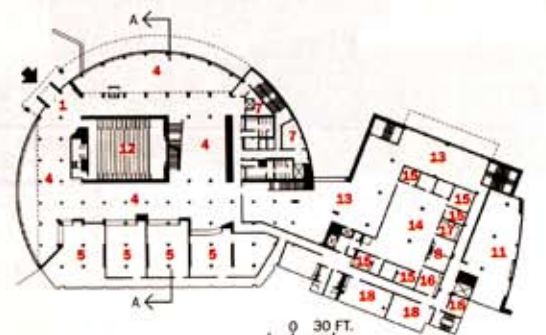
also uncovered a stair that leads to a rooftop bell tower (opposite). A walkway bisects the atrium on level three (above), while clerestory windows light a corridor leading to meeting rooms on level four (top).



LEVEL FOUR



LEVEL THREE



LEVEL TWO

0 30 FT.  
9 M.







## Solution

Charles Gwathmey and Gregory Karn, working with GBBN of Cincinnati, turned the University Center into an institutional version of the kind of house that people often describe as “Queen Anne front, Mary Ann behind.” They preserved its Federal Style facade but sheathed its large-scale, drum-shaped rear elevation in black zinc paneling and glass. Inside, they cut through the floors, stripped the central area down to its steel columns and beams to concrete slabs, and replaced traditional rooms and intimate lounges with a three-story, skylit atrium that serves as the building’s central circulation core. They preserved the original shed roof and its distinctive cupola but replaced much of the roofing with glass, so the rotunda is now flooded with natural light. This dramatic space encompasses an amphitheater overlooking athletic fields and a 600-seat food court; a game room on the lowest level opens to the newly created Stadium Plaza. A south wing houses a new multipurpose Great Hall that accommodates 1,000 people, the central campus kitchen, a restaurant, and the campus bookstore on an interior corridor leading to the visitors center in Leers Weinzapfel’s University Pavilion. ■



Seating for a food court surrounds both the north (above) and east (left) sides of an entry located at grade on Tangeman’s second level. The food court overlooks buildings constructed during the last decade as part of the university’s Signature Architecture program. The Great Hall on the fourth level of Tangeman’s south wing features large windows that face southeast toward a sports stadium (right).

