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**RICE UNIVERSITY JONES GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS  
UNVEILS DESIGN FOR AND BREAKS GROUND ON NEW BUILDING**

*Designed by Architecture Research Office, the new building will support the school's growing student and faculty populations and entrepreneurship ecosystem.*



*Renderings courtesy of Architecture Research Office*

**Houston, TX** – Rice University broke ground on a new, 112,000-square-foot building for the Jones Graduate School of Business yesterday, unveiling an innovative design by New York City-based Architecture Research Office (ARO) that will support the school's growing student and faculty populations and enhance the campus environment. Featuring state-of-the-art classrooms, office and open gathering spaces, dining areas, and facilities for private events, the new building is designed to nurture the next generation of global business leaders while maintaining the close-knit community and academic experience characteristic of Rice Business.

Together with the existing 160,000-square-foot McNair Hall – designed by Robert A.M. Stern Architects in 2002 – the building will form a new academic complex that redefines the campus's western quad and the edge of its central axis. The new facility will wrap the south and west sides of the existing McNair building and establish dramatic, three-story convening spaces adjacent to the current façades. With respect for the intricate patterning and beautiful brickwork of McNair Hall, ARO's design embraces the materials and detail of the existing building's façade and reinterprets them as interior finishes that bring warmth and character to these new convening spaces. Houston-based firm Kirksey is the Architect of Record.

“With the opportunity to design this new building on Rice's historic – and exceptionally beautiful – campus comes an enormous responsibility,” says Stephen Cassell, ARO's Principal-in-Charge

on the project. “Our task is to deliver an integrated and contextual yet forward-looking structure that embodies Rice Business’s focus on the future as it continues to grow.”

ARO calibrated the design of the new building’s façade and interiors to the strong Texas sun. The serrated brick façade will deflect afternoon sunlight, allowing the interiors to stay relatively cool, while also creating a visual rhythm of old and new materials. Brick in bond and herringbone patterns, as well as areas of glazed red brick, are modern interpretations of the traditional materials of McNair Hall and other iconic campus structures. The red-clay-tile roof and cast-stone trim of the McNair building are also reflected in the new facility. The new building will be constructed on an existing below-grade parking garage, and introduce new floodproofing measures to bolster the school’s resilience during increasingly extreme weather.

The new structure encloses the Woodson Courtyard with a glass façade and skylit coffered roof, transforming the active courtyard into an atrium and landing space that can be accessed via one of the two new main entrances. This new central hub will be adaptable throughout the year for everything from casual convenings to formal events. A sculptural steel staircase leads to the second floor, where a 180-person event space will host the school’s signature events. The Walk – an interconnected, triple-height path below the skylit ceiling – will connect this courtyard to a new West Commons. New dining facilities adjacent to Woodson will spill outdoors to the surrounding tree-lined terrace and shaded patio seating, creating the kind of porous indoor/outdoor spaces that are quintessential to the Rice campus experience.

ARO composed the new building’s interiors to meet the demands of evolving modes of teaching and learning, from traditional lectures to more informal gatherings and collaborations between students, faculty, and visiting professionals. Two 120-seat classrooms and two 65-person classrooms will provide a range of spaces to support increased enrollment, while breakout rooms throughout will facilitate Rice Business’s team-based approach to learning. Undergraduate programs are grouped on the west end of the building, with the classrooms and gathering spaces, while faculty and administrative spaces will occupy the eastern portion of the third floor. Throughout the new facility, ARO has created spaces that will allow for the kinds of informal meetings, conversations, classes, and social interactions – between students, faculty, and administrators – that are vital to creating a sense of campus community.

In partnership with Nelson Byrd Woltz Landscape Architects (NBW), the design will transform the traditional west quad into an active campus green, while preserving and engaging the adjacent *Twilight Epiphany* Skyspace installation by James Turrell. To maintain views from within the Turrell installation, the massing of the new building is stepped back from the Skyspace, and its angled façade will mitigate light from within affecting the installation at night. The building will also provide new vantage points from which to admire the Skyspace, including large windows in the second-floor event space that overlook the installation.

Embodying the school’s evolving pedagogy – which emphasizes more experiential learning, an entrepreneurial mindset, and collaborative methods of teaching and learning – the new building

will support Rice Business's mission of nurturing and developing principled, innovative thought leaders in global communities as it continues to grow.

"We are energized by the momentum of our innovative new programs, the addition of new faculty and students and a fresh outlook on the future," says Peter Rodriguez, dean of the Jones Graduate School of Business. "Our commitment is to attract more talented and innovative students, faculty and staff to Rice, who will further improve our programs and research capabilities. This wonderful new building is critical to fulfilling that commitment."

The project is designed to achieve LEED Gold certification.

**About ARO:**

[Architecture Research Office \(ARO\)](http://www.aro.net) is the New York City firm led by Stephen Cassell, Kim Yao, and Adam Yarinsky. ARO is a diverse collective united by their collaborative process, commitment to accountable action, and social and environmental responsibility. Research gives their work purpose and intention. Their architecture unites beauty and form with strategy and intelligence. Their office designs spaces that inspire people, further institutional missions, and advance equity and resilience. This philosophy has earned the firm over one hundred design awards including the 2020 AIA Architecture Firm Award, the AIA New York State Firm of the Year Award, and the Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt National Design Award for Architecture. For more information on Architecture Research Office, please visit [www.aro.net](http://www.aro.net).

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