

# SEMANS GRISWOLD ENVIRONMENTAL HALL

Building Area: 9,500 GSF—Construction Cost: \$11.6 million—Completion: October 2019



## VISION/GOALS

The College aims to prepare the next generation of leaders to help solve the most pressing environmental problems of the 21st century. Washington College's Semans-Griswold Environmental Hall aims to be a regional hub for hands-on research on the Chesapeake Bay and a magnet for thought leadership centered on the environmental challenges facing the region, the country, and the world.

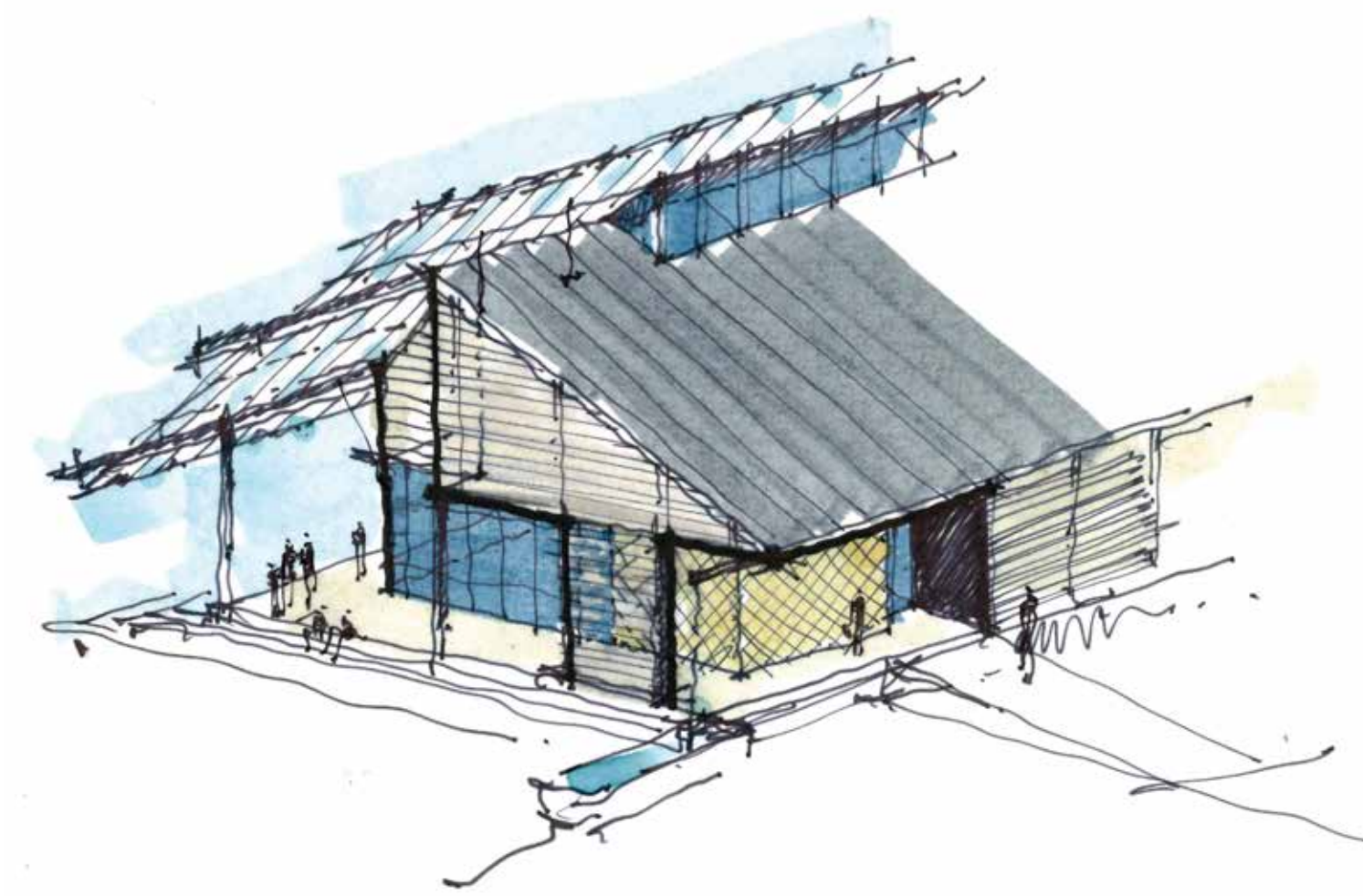
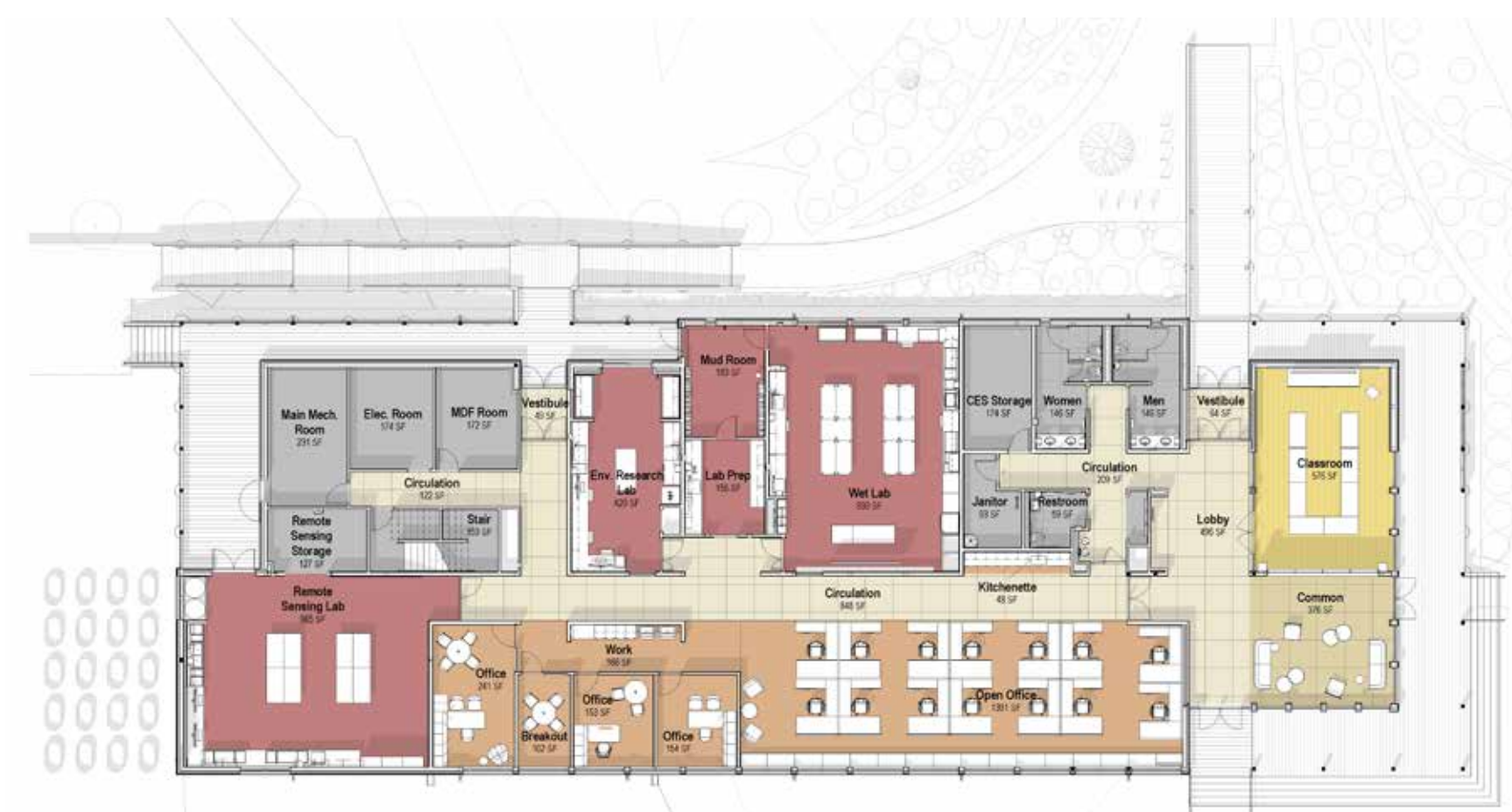
The facility provides experiential teaching and research laboratory, academic, and office spaces that embody the environmental science program's commitment to sustainability and local ecology. Among its innovative design features is a state-of-the-art marine science lab that includes a river flow-through system, bringing ambient water from the Chester River to give faculty and students the unique ability to study river ecology and marine organism biology in a controlled environment.

Semans-Griswold Environmental Hall demonstrates the College's commitment to stewarding the finite resources of the Eastern Shore, leading the way for environmental study, preservation, and advocacy. The project aims to be a model for sustainable buildings.

## PROCESS

The waterfront campus at Washington College was first visualized in 2008. After a decade of fundraising, College leadership worked with Ayers Saint Gross to refine the program and scope. Ayers Saint Gross involved teaching and research faculty as well as a high performance building consultant to design a building that produces more energy than it uses in pursuit of the Living-Building Challenge Petal Certification.

Semans-Griswold Environmental Hall houses the Center for Environment & Society at Washington College, one of three Signature Centers that focus on providing undergraduate students with graduate-level experiences outside of the classroom.



## TAKE-AWAY RECOMMENDATIONS

Ayers Saint Gross found it important to work directly with the stakeholders, in this case, the researchers who would work in this building daily. The research team prioritized natural light and access as the top needs for their space. All spaces in the building are visually accessible to one another—making for ease of movement through the space, collaboration between researchers, and also putting learning on display for the students who will work and take classes in the facility. To design a facility that functions for sensitive and high-level research, it is important to listen to and earn the trust of the faculty.



RENDERING OF SEMANS-GRISWOLD ENVIRONMENTAL HALL, AYERS SAINT GROSS.

## OUTCOMES

### INNOVATIVE LAB SPACES

**Wet Lab and River Flow Through System**—The wet lab hosts a river flow through system, which pumps water from the Chester River directly into and out of the lab, allowing students to study different aspects of the Chester River in a controlled environment using water directly from the river.

**Watershed Innovation Lab**—The lab serves as the home to CES's Chester River Watershed Observatory. Students have the opportunity to work on buoys that monitor the river's water quality, side scan sonar, building AquaBotz and more.

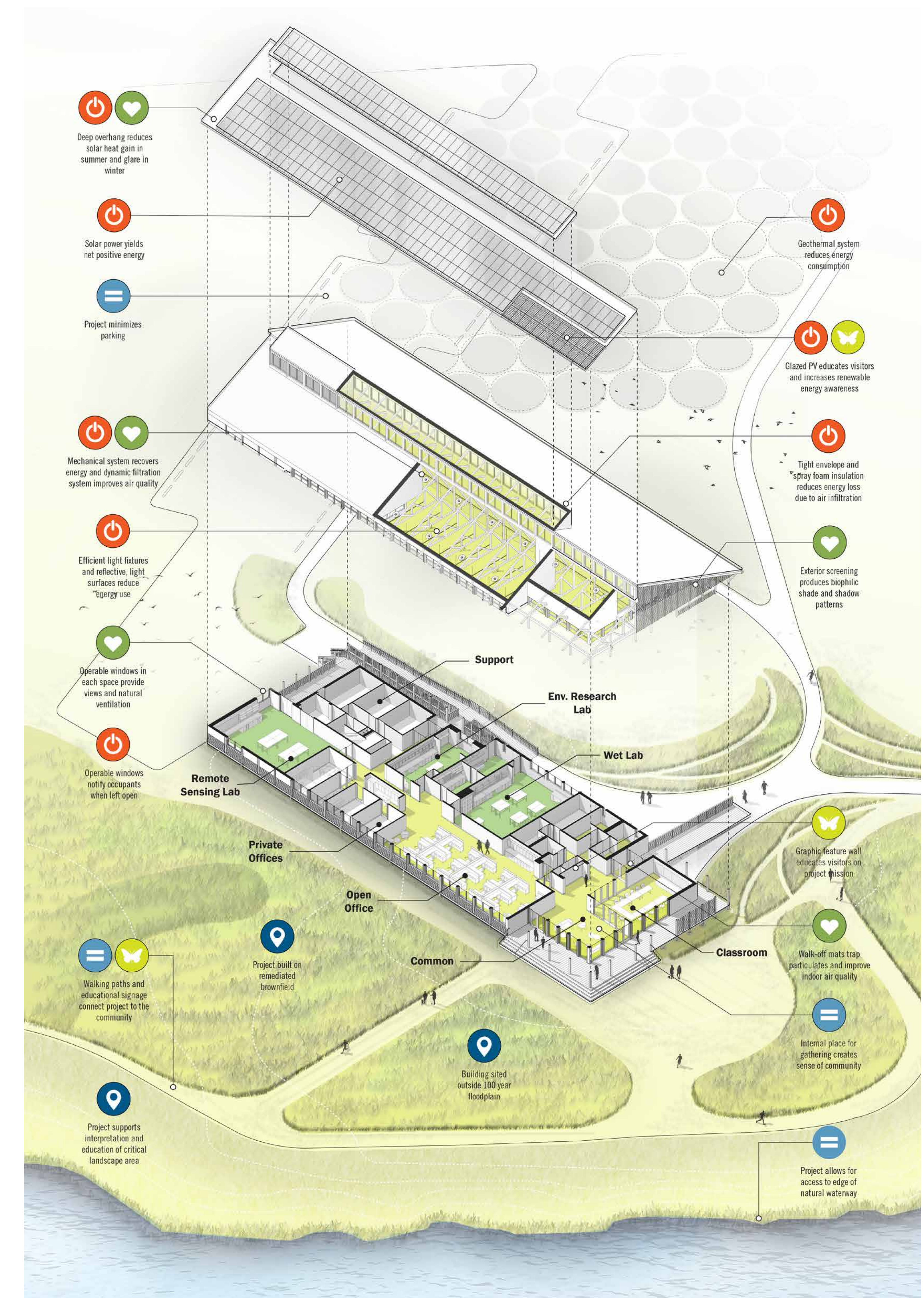
**Environmental Research Lab**—The third lab serves as a laboratory learning space for hands-on research.

### CLASSROOM

The classroom, located adjacent to the main commons and along the front porch of the facility, offers sweeping views to the Chester River. The space seats 24 and utilizes flexible, adjustable furnishings to allow for pedagogical adaptation to the evolving curriculum. Glass doors with a 180-degree swing allow the classroom and adjacent commons space to flex and accommodate a larger crowd of students for special events.



PHOTO OF FINISHED BUILDING AT RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONY, OCTOBER 2019.



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