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## Consensus At Quinnipiac University Polling Institute... A Job Well Done

The Quinnipiac University Polling Institute in Hamden, Connecticut was started in 1988 by a University Marketing Research Professor as a public service, calling on residents of Connecticut. The independent Quinnipiac Poll has grown significantly from a regional to a national resource, and now regularly surveys residents in Connecticut, Florida, New York, New York City, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania and other various locations nationwide. The surveys address political races, state and national elections and issues of public concern, such as schools, taxes,

transportation, municipal services and the environment. The Polling Institute eventually outgrew their space and identified the need for a new facility. Quinnipiac University selected Wyeth Architects to design the project and Petra Construction Corporation to build it. Design professionals Leonard Wyeth and Richard King were immediately offered a creative challenge, as they were asked to design a new state-of-the-art building incorporating an existing concrete block vehicle repair facility on University property.

"We clearly needed a larger facility to consolidate two locations and to create a more effective environment for our interviewers to conduct surveys," said Douglas Schwartz, Director of the Quinnipiac University Poll since 1995. Mr. Schwartz, no stranger to this environment, previously served in New York City as a survey associate with the CBS News Election and Survey Unit, and as an election night

analyst for CBS Correspondent Ed Bradley of 60 Minutes. He directs all aspects of the survey process, including formulating the questions and analyzing the data. The telephone interviews are conducted in the evening by trained students and retirees. Core interview hours are from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. weekdays, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturdays, and 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Sundays. Polls are conducted throughout the year and are especially active around political elections or issues affecting public policy. In addition to the increased number of interview stations, also known as polling carrels, the Polling Institute needed a training room, a conference room, support spaces and appropriate offices for the full-time staff. The new building allows training and telephone interviews to be conducted simultaneously, which will be beneficial as the number of surveys increase.

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*Quinnipiac University's new Polling Institute building provided much needed expansion.*

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The Petra Team, led by Senior Project Manager, Barry Zorzanello, included Dave Hall as the Project Manager and Peter Haber as the Project Superintendent. Robert Westrin and Victor Host supported the team as Assistant Project Managers. Construction started in the spring of 2006 with a 600 foot long access road and site improvements. Since a town road will eventually be relocated over a portion of the new access road, underground utilities had to be installed approximately eight feet below the access road surface. Demolition of a portion of the existing vehicle repair facility and reuse of the remaining structure were challenging both for the architect and for Petra. The existing building's roof had to be supported and stabilized while the curtain walls were removed, allowing the existing structure to be integrated into the new facility.

The new building includes some interesting materials and construction details. The exterior includes copper gutters, a copper clad overhang at the front entrance and a custom cherry entry door. Some interior features include a vaulted and curved interior ceiling, suspended acoustical panels, dimmable Lutron lighting and Lumicor light boxes in the interior stairwell. Petra's custom millwork shop played a major role in the project. Their craftsmen fabricated and installed approximately 162 polling carrels, the custom designed reception desk, supervisor control stations, casework in the library and other custom millwork

throughout the space. "The Petra millshop team did an outstanding job, from the shop drawings to the finishes and installation," said Petra Project Manager Dave Hall. The hardwoods used in the millwork included cherry and fiddleback English sycamore. "Special kudos to Petra for being part of a problem solving team," said architect Leonard Wyeth. "This was a fast track and challenging project, with the Petra team as an important part of the solution."

"The building and the new spaces are fantastic," said Polling Director Douglas Schwartz. "We've moved in and we're functioning very effectively. This will allow us to handle even more telephone interviews, including key states as the national election approaches, and special polls for breaking news events." The polls are conducted by telephone interview, prompted by scripted questions on a computer

display screen in each polling carrel. Telephone calls are placed by random digit dialing managed by the CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) System. Responses are captured on computer by each interviewer. Approximately 1,000 interviews are registered before a survey is considered complete. The results are posted to the Polling Institute website and sent electronically to numerous media organizations.

The Quinnipiac University Polling Institute is well positioned to continue providing a valuable public service. Petra is proud to provide high quality construction services to the University and to be a part of such an important project.

To discuss construction services for your next project, please call Guido Petra, President or Terry Wooding, Executive Vice President at 203-865-6043.



*Polling carrels are used to conduct telephone interviews for the Polling Institute.*

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