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The Building

Editorial Staff

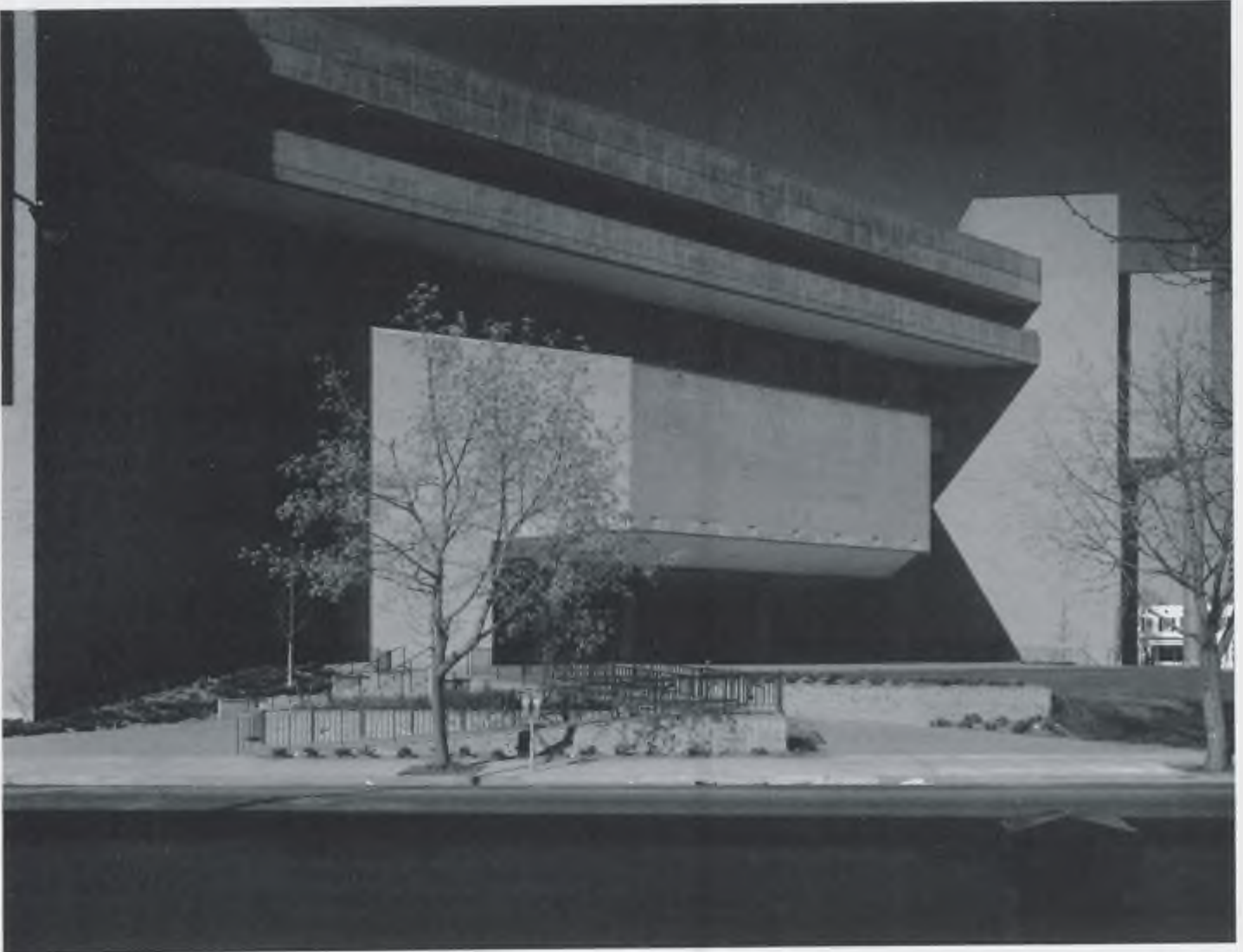
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The Building



he School of Business and Public Administration building is a massive, brick-and-concrete structure that sits at approximately the highest point on Howard University's main campus, providing panoramic views of the Washington skyline. With five floors and a basement, it covers 130,859 gross square feet. It faces northeast at the

corner of Sixth and Fairmont Streets and is bounded by Georgia Avenue on the west.

Because of its massive size, alone, the building tends to dominate (some say "overpower") the entire northern end of the campus and the adjacent neighborhood.

"The university informed us that it wanted a grand building. It wanted a building that indicated power, strength," observes John Sulton, one of the architects who worked on the building's design. "This is the reason you see the grand scale and the exposure of the tall [concrete] columns. The university also wanted a building that was utilitarian inside, the type of building in which maintenance could be kept at a minimum. So you'll see that in most of the building, except in places like offices, very utilitarian finishes are used—tiles, masonry walls . . .

"I think that all of the finishes and all of the colors used throughout, and even the design of the building, indicate that something's different about this school: a fast pace. Even the location of the facilities indicates this, with the administrative offices on the top floor, educational spaces in between and the grand entrance on the ground floor to invite the public and the students in and with a grand-looking stairway leading upward."

Sulton's firm, Sulton & Campbell, Joint Venture, and the firm of Navy Marshall & Gordon served as design architects for the building. The firm of Robert J. Nash, FAIA & Associates, P. C., served as construction architects. Kora and Williams Corporation acted as general contractors, while interior design was handled by Jumanne Design, Incorporated.

The school's dean, Milton Wilson, worked closely with the architects throughout the design process, dictating, for instance, the tiered seating used in most classrooms. "He wanted everyone to be seen and to be able to see what was going on at the front of the classrooms," explains Sulton, whose firm also designed the College of Medicine's Seeley G. Mudd building and Howard University Hospital's parking ga-

rage. "I think the building itself really reflects Dean Wilson; he shaped it up to what he wanted."

As an architect, Sulton considers Wilson's involvement a definite plus. "It's much easier for the architect to work with a client when the client has a very good idea of what he wants," Sulton notes. "And the client always ends up getting a better job."

The building's ground floor constitutes its most public space. Located here are an information desk, the offices of the Small Business Development Center, the upper level of the library and a wide tiled expanse that brings to mind a grand concourse. Punctuating this expanse is a crowded bulletin board, which serves as a magnet for students, and a display case showing photos of 24 of the school's successful alumni accompanied by brief texts describing their careers and their views on the value of the training they received at the school.

The library, which held 33,567 volumes and 2,392 periodicals at the end of the 1984 fiscal year, includes room for expansion. Its lower level, featuring streamlined individual and group study carrels, inviting arrangements of upholstered furniture and, of course, shelves and shelves of books, is reached by a graceful spiral staircase.

The second floor of the building, reached either by that focal open staircase or one of the school's two elevators, could be considered semi-public space. Set unobtrusively along one wall is the entrance to a handsome 300-seat auditorium which is set off by walls of wood slats and rows of blue seats. Classrooms, conference rooms and offices are also located on this level.

The three upper floors contain additional classrooms; offices; conference and seminar rooms; student and faculty lounges; a typing room; a computer center housing an IBM 4331 computer with 41 terminals and 10 printers; a laboratory with 40 personal computers; and a two-story audiovisual studio with the capability to produce in-house television programs and to project business programs produced elsewhere, including stock market reports, directly into classrooms via a special satellite dish. (All classrooms in the building have television monitors.)

Furnishings throughout the building have muted colors and clean lines, reflecting the corporate aura the structure seems to give off. While some students admit to feelings of nostalgia for the school's former makeshift quarters in a converted warehouse ("It was like we were all part of a big family, all thrown together," one remarks), they nevertheless agree that the new building far better meets the school's needs as a complex, interdependent world moves closer to the 21st century. □