Reference Projects

University of New England - Portland, Maine

PROJECT OVERVIEW

MAPEI products were used to install a facade on the University of New England's new Oral Health Center, home of its College of Dental Medicine. To modernize the traditional brick structure, ultra large thin tile panels resembling dark gray slate were used to cover portions of the building's exterior.



PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Category: Public Building – University MAPEI Sales Rep: Ron Gosselin Project Owner: University of New England General Contractor: Allied Cook Construction Architect: Port City Architecture Distributor: Daltile Portland Tile Installer: Paul G. White Interior Solutions Project Manager: Jonathan White Project Size: 36,000 square feet (3 345 m²)

MAPEI PRODUCTS USED

- Kerabond/Keralastic mortar system
- Ultracolor Plus grout





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University of New England – Portland, Maine

Thin tile adds majesty to university facade

The University of New England (UNE) has a new \$14.5-million Oral Health Center on its Portland, Maine, campus. It is the clinical home of UNE's College of Dental Medicine, which opened in Fall 2013 to coincide with the admission of the inaugural class of dental students.

The center was designed by Port City Architecture and Kahler Slater, and built by Allied Cook Construction. At 36,000 square feet (3 345 m²), the state-ofthe-art facility houses the only dental college in northern New England. The dental school addresses the shortage of dentists in rural Maine, and the Oral Health Center offers patients access to affordable dental care while allowing students to gain clinical experience.

In adding some drama to the traditional brick face of the building on the historic campus, the architects chose large, thin tile panels as their design element. According to their plans, large-format porcelain tile resembling gray slate would frame the brick masonry on all sides and along the roof line, allowing it to be viewed from any direction.

Paul G. White Interior Solutions (Portland, Maine) installed the 39" x 118" (99 x 300 cm) Daltile SlimLite™ panels. Paul G. White has been in operation for 44 years in New England, and three generations of the White family work in the tile business. Paul G. White himself oversaw this project, with his son Jonathan White acting as project manager.

The critical factor in the installation was the need to pre-plan extensively before beginning the actual placement of the tile panels.

Because this would be the installation team's first experience with using the huge, ultra thin SlimLite panels, White Interior Solutions arranged with tile supplier Daltile and installation systems manufacturer MAPEI to conduct a seminar for everyone who would be involved. "Education is the foundation on which our company's strength is built," Jonathan said. White Interior Solutions has developed an entire floor of its headquarters for ongoing education and training for installers.

With knowledge of the best practices in hand, Paul instructed the crews to "measure carefully." The architects provided a layout that matched the panels with window lines and soffits to gain the proper effect. While some panels could be placed in their entirety, others had to be cut to accommodate the layout. Some panels had to be cut only 3" to 4" (7,5 to 10 cm) wide by the full 118" (300 cm) length to do wraps at windows and bumpouts on the face of the building.



Because the warehouse was nearby, White crews pre-cut the panels before transporting them about 5 miles to the jobsite. "The panels are very fragile when they are in thin strips," Jonathan said. "We had built a backboard where the installers could lay the panel against the side of the scissors lift we were using to raise the panels into position." The teams applied MAPEI's Kerabond/ Keralastic[™] mortar to both the building surface and the tile panels. Crews used suction-cup handles to hang the panels and horseshoe spacers to bring them together.

One important step that the crew learned in training was to go over the panels with a vibrating sander to set the mortar in place. Once the mortar was set, the panels were grouted with Ultracolor[°] Plus grout in black, which significantly reduced the possibility of efflorescence on the finished facade.

"We were able to complete roughly one side of the building per week," Jonathan said. "We followed the masonry installers, so we followed their timetable." White Interior Solutions teams set about 1,500 sq. ft. (139 m²) of the SlimLite panels on the front of the building and the same amount on the back, plus 750 sq. ft. (69,7 m²) on each side. Some panels were also installed to cover buildouts on the roof. Paul's admonition that they do the precuts carefully made the installation easy, fast and successful.

"This was a new venture for our company, considering we have hung the traditional marble and granite slabs on buildings before," Jonathan said. "It felt very different to be able to pick up these large slabs with just one or two people. We're looking forward to doing more



with these slim panels because of the relative ease of use. That really counts when you're working in the middle of the summer, like we were on this job."

White Interior Solutions handles anywhere from one to five exterior building facades annually, in addition to installing hundreds of thousands of square feet of interior flooring each year. The company sees the new slim tile panels as a means of doing the job more easily, and hopes it may increase the number of exterior jobs.

"Using the MAPEI installation products ensures that we will have a successful job," Jonathan said. "The best thing is, when we run into a problem, MAPEI technical people are always there to help us out. Together with Daltile and MAPEI, we make a pretty good team!"

