

## Narrative

KSS Architects is dedicated to creating excellent places that inspire people. When designing a building or space, we go beyond the standard building requirements to the unspoken aspirations of the client that make architecture outstanding. Our commitment goes beyond the buildings we design to the environment in which our projects are located, our community service activities, and the workplace we provide for our employees.

Since its founding in 1983, KSS Architects has grown manifold in size, abilities, and ambitions. Founded with just three architects in a single back room of a multitenant building, KSS today has a staff of 40 talented, dedicated and generous team members in offices in Princeton and Philadelphia. Our clients are worldwide leaders in education, development, commercial real estate, corporations, and municipalities. We have grown in areas of expertise as well as geographic outreach: we have current projects located beyond the NJ/PA region in Wisconsin, New York, and Virginia. Though the current economy has forced the building industry to make difficult decisions, KSS is proud to maintain the high quality of work our clients and our staff expect. Recent activity in the market has made us optimistic about the future and opportunities that await us. We have also made the most of this time to expand our capabilities beyond architectural design to offer our clients value added services such as near- and long-term planning and development and sustainable design strategies.

KSS Architects survives because we believe in a process of collaboration that pushes both the client and ourselves to set ambitious goals and achieve them. In fact, the American Institute of Architects' national Web site features one of our projects as an ideal example of "How Design Works" in educational projects. Our projects have been honored with awards from organizations such as AIA New Jersey.

With our growing portfolio of work comes a great commitment to ensure our buildings have a low impact on the environment. We are leaders in energy and environmental design in the profession, and we walk the walk. Fourteen staff members are LEED Accredited Professionals. One of our founding partners participated in the development of the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED standards for the K-12 building type. With the support of the National Association for Industrial and Office Properties, another partner researched and wrote guidelines for the development of a LEED rating system for distribution centers, now in review by USGBC. This year KSS celebrated its first LEED Certified project, Kean University's Center for Academic Success. We currently have six additional projects pursuing LEED certification. However, all of our projects follow sustainable design practices regardless if the client chooses not to pursue LEED certification formally. Several of our projects have won awards for their significant improvement to the community and environment. We also named our first Director of Sustainable Design, who has become active in the green building community in many ways, including participating in the technical review board for Greenbuild 2009.

Our firm has gained much national prominence in the past year. Several of our team members have presented in national conferences, and our projects and firm have been featured in the national media, including The New York Times, The Chronicle of Higher Education, Urban Land, and eco-structure.

KSS is committed to community service and the design profession. For six years, KSS has mentored high school students interested in design and construction through the ACE Mentor Program. In 2008, we participated in the Community Design Collaborative's Infill Philadelphia initiative, for which our office provided pro-bono design services to relocate and expand a local food co-op, which provides low-income urban areas access to fresh food and produce. For several years, KSS has actively supported Habitat for Humanity, March for Dimes, Marine Toys for Tots Foundation, the Children's Crisis Treatment Center, and Eden Autism Services. KSS teams have run in the Jersey Shore Relay Marathon to support Special Olympics New Jersey. Next year, our Director of Interior Design will become the president-elect and then president of Industrial/Commercial Real Estate Women, Inc., (ICREW) New Jersey, where she is now the co-director of programming and philanthropy. One of our partners is leading a delegation to promote educational and economic development in an impoverished community in Guatemala through building and design. We have also been active in the AIA. This year, KSS cofounding partner Allan Kehrt was elected to chairman of the AIA Jury of Fellows. We also organize the AIA/CES-accredited course, Public Relations and Architecture, which brings AIA-NJ members together with media professionals to learn strategies for publicizing work and the firm.

We are committed to making the workplace one of growth and collaboration. Employee learning opportunities extend beyond tasks necessary for project delivery. We sponsor lunchtime seminars by in-house experts on topics ranging from technical to management issues. Staff members also have opportunities to present an area of design of interest not limited to architecture.

KSS has experienced many ups and downs in the economy in our 26 years. Each time we emerge stronger and wiser. We anticipate a future filled with the growth of our staff members, capabilities, and outreach. Our strength lies in our abilities to balance the business side of architecture with a commitment to advancing design and technical knowledge, and the promotion of the profession and its ideals within the community at large. This commitment is the best way to ensure the healthy future of the firm, the profession, and our ability to continue creating excellent places.

