On July 29, the campus community celebrated the latest addition to the medical campus at UVM, at the formal opening of the new Courtyard at Given — an innovative project that adds much-needed space to the College. Under the courtyard’s transparent roof — added in 2002 when the space became the temporary home for the Dana Medical Library — a new heart of the medical complex has risen: two four-story structures, connected to each other and to the Given Building by glassed-in bridges, that now house all of the College’s operations for student services, admissions, alumni and development, and other key offices. Upper floors are occupied by administrators of the Vermont Cancer Center, the Center for Clinical and Translational Science, the UVM Center on Aging, and departmental offices. Centralizing these offices has the added benefit of allowing the College to reclaim thousands of square feet of valuable laboratory space in the Given Building.
In the late 1950s, the College of Medicine embarked on an ambitious plan to greatly increase and modernize its space for education and research, with the planning and fundraising for the Medical Alumni and Given Buildings. Built on former open land on the far eastern edge of main campus, the building was at that time the largest and most expensive building on campus, and was built after the most ambitious fund-raising campaign in UVM’s history raised the $8.7 million (in 1960 dollars) needed to complete the project. The building, designed by the New York firm of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, went through various changes (it was originally a six-story structure). The final building plan had three stages, the construction of Medical Alumni, which was dedicated in 1959, the second-phase “Medical Science Building,” which consisted of part of what would be the north sector of Given, and finally the full Given Building, finished in 1968 and named in honor of the family foundation whose $2 million gift — the largest ever received by UVM at that time — had been key to the project’s completion. Both Medical Alumni, which was razed in 2002 for the building of the Medical Education Center, and Given had open courtyards — Given’s can be seen at right beyond the two gentlemen seated in the former Austin Lounge. Today, with the addition of the Health Science Research Facility, completed in 2001, and the Colchester Research Facility finished earlier this year, the College of Medicine’s physical space totals more than 560,000 square feet.

The COURTYARD AT GIVEN was designed by the Montpelier firm Black River Design Architects. Black River, and Engelborgh Construction, the main contractor, faced the daunting task of building what was described as a “ship in a bottle.” All construction materials, including poured concrete, cranes, lifts, and other equipment were brought in through an eight-foot opening created in the exterior wall of Given, and traveled through a seven-foot wide corridor into the courtyard space. Construction was further planned to cause minimal disruption, with work taking place only in the afternoons and evenings. Instead of jack-hammering the existing concrete slab left from the temporary library, the material was sawed into three-foot squares and carried out for recycling. (Approximately 80 percent of construction and demolition waste on the project was diverted from landfill.) The finished building is designed to conform with Silver LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) specifications — 90 percent of exterior walls are glass, allowing daylight into interior spaces, and lighting is infrared and motion-sensor triggered, for maximum energy efficiency.
The building is registered with the U.S. Green Building Council and awaiting confirmation for Silver LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification for new construction.

Infrared and motion sensors allow the Courtyard to use 48% less energy for lighting than a conventionally designed building.

Over 17,000 square feet of glass was used in the buildings.

Moveable interior walls, and a raised floor system increase energy efficiency and allow flexibility for easy reconfiguration of office spaces.

During one of the stages of construction there were 14 lifts being used inside the Courtyard simultaneously.

There are 12 bridges connecting the 2 new buildings to each other and to the Given building.

The 4 ducts in the corners of the courtyard supply fresh air to the atrium in the case of a fire. The smoke-filled air is discharged through the roof through exhaust fans located between the new skylights.

The building has 160 tons of structural steel made of 90 percent recycled content.

Like building a large “ship in a bottle,” every tool and piece of material in the Courtyard’s construction entered through a 7-foot wide corridor in the side of Given.