## How Auburn's CMCC got a state-of-the-art criminal justice center

Working: An electrician, a carpenter and a foreman save Central Maine Community College \$1 million.

## Christopher Wheelock Sun Journal



The Central Maine Community College maintenance crew — Brian Landry, left, Dan Graham and Matthew Walker — built the Public Service Simulation Center at CMMC in Auburn. *Daryn Slover/Sun Journal* 

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AUBURN — When Central Maine Community College's criminal justice program began to run out of room, a decision was made to create a stand-alone building to house what can be noisy sessions with students firing blanks, shouting and simulating hostage situations or other scenarios.

The school has a maintenance team made up of three CMCC graduates, who were tapped to build what is known as the Public Service Simulation Center. The concrete, sprinkler system, heating and air conditioning and plumbing were contracted out. Everything else was done by the trio.



Dan Graham is the facilities director at the school. He graduated from the electrical program in 2002, studied electromechanical engineering and was a foreman with a commercial construction company.

Brian Landry graduated in 1997 and is the school's electrician.

Matthew Walker is a 2022 graduate of the carpentry program and is the school's master carpenter. He was still a student when he began working on the building.

"We built an electronics lab after I graduated," Graham said. "The president of the college at the time hired myself and another former graduate to design the current electronics lab. And then when I graduated, they hired me on to build it."

The school saves a lot of money by doing such projects itself, but it is not focused solely on the bottom line, according to Graham.

"An architect gave us basically the structural plans for the building," he said, "and then basically everything else design wise was done by us."

That means everything from paint color to fixtures, ceiling, lighting and the layout of the rooms.

The process allows the school to customize the building to the needs of the program at a fraction of the cost. In this case, it got a \$2 million building for \$1 million, paid with grant money and capital funds.

The trade-off was time. It took twice as long to build, but it includes some unique features and functions.

There is a classroom with all types of electronics, including cameras and microphones in the simulation areas so instructors can monitor what is happening live in a control room or play back specific scenes to show students what they did right or wrong.

There is also an armory room where all the weapons outfitted with a laser system are locked down.

Dan Graham stands in a doorway of the Public Service Simulation Center at Central Maine Community College in Auburn. The room has moveable walls so students or emergency workers in training can simulate dangerous situations. The lighting in the ceiling was created by the team from CMCC to suit the needs of the room and has been copied around campus. *Daryn Slover/Sun Journal* 

The back section of the building can be blacked out and has interlocking panels that can be assembled to simulate a house or building that trainees must navigate, fake blood and all.

Locker rooms include showers so students can clean up after physical exercises in the grassy area behind the center, which can often include mud.

There is also a garage that can be used for simulations that require more space.

Walker had the sharpest learning curve of the trio, working one day a week on the building as he attended classes.

"I would come in and we'd frame," he said. "I got a really good part of setting the trusses on the roof, but then, by the time I finished graduating, we still had a lot of the exterior."

So he painted and installed tile in the bathrooms, ceiling tiles and custom ceiling tile lighting. To make it symmetrical, the tiles had to be centered in the room or hallway at an angle, which was challenging, Walker said, but one of his favorite parts of the project.

"Putting that at an angle was a real highlight — it's different," he said. "You never see anything like that, you know. I mean, when you work in a job like this, and you start to notice those things."

The worst part, Walker said, was insulating the building.

"We sheathed it, then we wrapped it in ice and water shield," he said. "We wrapped it in foam, and then we wrapped it again in sheathing. So, we literally circled this building five times (to comply with codes), just before we could put siding on."

Walker was guided by the more experienced Graham, who acted as foreman and electrician Landry, who worked for 15 years in commercial construction before joining CMCC.

For Landry, the toughest part was working alone for the most of the time.

"I did all the electrical — if it's an outlet, light projector on the wall fire alarm system, security system, ethernet cable, speakers, everything," he said. "Wire up the boilers, wire all the HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) equipment."

When Landry was not wiring something, he would help build walls or with anything else that needed be done.

The best part, he said, was finally seeing the project completed. Other projects at the campus had to be prioritized, while some had to be put off until the building was completed.



Matthew Walter stands outside the armory room used to store StressVest training weapons at the Public Service Simulation Center at Central Maine Community College in Auburn. Walker was a student when he began working on the building. He is now a master carpenter at the school. *Daryn Slover/Sun Journal* 

"I kind of like seeing the finished product, especially the amount of time we put into it," Graham said. "The thing I don't like about it is how much we lose on the rest of the campus, because there's a lot of stuff that I walk by and you see nicks in the wall and like, man, I wish I had time to fix that, but I gotta put this fire out first."

All three men said they like to see how people react to the finished product, which is not the only project they have tackled together.

"You get a lot more pride in what you do because you see it every day," Graham said. "You see how people react to it, and that's kind of my favorite thing in the whole project is watching other people react to the spaces when they go in."

Students use the center about 90% of the time. When school is not in session and on weekends, the facility is used by those in local, state and federal law enforcement for training.

In their downtime, the three men have differing interests.

Graham said he likes to work on antique cars.

"I've got a lot of old race cars," he said. "I like playing sports — basketball. I was national championship in basketball, so I like playing sports. I'm coaching my daughter's team now."

Landry says one of the reasons he took the job was to be able to spend more time with his family.

"Watching my kids grow up," he said, "and being part of their sports teams. Coaching and being able to see their games, going to practices and just being a dad."

Landry said he also enjoys snowmobiling and a little golf, but mumbled something about getting too old to do some of the things he used to do.

Walker, the youngest of the trio, said he loves that he can be the cross-country coach at Bruce M. Whittier Middle School in Poland.

"I do a lot of restoring of antique furniture," he said, "and I have a whole collection of old antique power tools that I've restored and hand tools that I've restored."

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