

# PACE ACADEMY – A CASE STUDY

**LOCATION: ATLANTA, GEORGIA**  
**ROLE: EQUIPMENT PROCUREMENT  
& INSTALLATION**



**RUSS STREETT**  
PROJECT MANAGER



# PACE ACADEMY

## A BOELTER CASE STUDY SPOTLIGHT

In the summer of 2021, Pace Academy (Atlanta, Georgia) began updating the school's foodservice program and commercial kitchen. This required consistent communication and coordination between school facilities, project managers and every trade involved. Although the window for completion was short, the effort that went into this project ensured that the remodeled space was ready to begin serving students and faculty at the start of the new school year.

Bob Mills, President of UDS Development Services, has been working with Pace Academy for more than 12 years providing their planning and facility development and acting as the owner's representative and project manager. During this time, Bob has overseen the master planning process that completely transformed the original building – an iconic landmark of the Buckhead community – and updated it with a variety of state-of-the-art, modern safety and security features.

### UPDATING THE FOODSERVICE PROGRAM

Just prior to the summer break, initial planning began to adjust the school's existing cafeteria and dining operation, bringing it up to speed and making it more efficient and capable of providing hot meals to its growing population of students and staff. The school's existing music room was identified as the location to be converted and remodeled into a new commercial kitchen.

Up to this point, the school relied on a central kitchen that prepared food for the entire campus. Individual meals would

be loaded onto a truck and driven to the lower school location where a warming kitchen was ready and waiting. This was an operation that was challenging to maintain and one that Pace Academy's foodservice team was in dire need of improving upon. The administrators understood that these changes were imperative to increasing the overall quality of food that was being served.



## PRE-PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Proper time management would play a significant factor in the success or failure of this project – with only a 10-week construction window scheduled to begin at the end of May 2021. Russ Streett, Boelter's Project Manager, and Tommy Burruss, Assistant Project Manager at New South Construction, met with Bob Mills, Pace Academy's Ownership team, superintendents, subcontractors and a number of architects, engineers and kitchen consultants prior to the conclusion of Pace Academy's semester. Together, they closely reviewed the logistical challenges of the project, conducted the necessary pre-planning and assessment process, and identified an immediate start date as soon as the students were released for summer break.



**"We simply didn't have the advantage of fully accessing the space prior to it becoming available. Students were using the music room up to the final day of class. In conjunction with Boelter, we met to review and confirm the mechanical documents, as well as identify the various kitchen equipment specifications."** – Bob Mills, President, UDS Development Services

Significant planning for a project like this is crucial. If adequate time isn't taken to examine each individual element, the process of installing a new kitchen can quickly get out of control. When the initial planning stage is rushed, the execution becomes problematic. A gas line may sit too far from the wall and suddenly the oven connections and mounted hood are misaligned. Taking the time to go through in-depth, pre-coordination meetings to review and identify the specification for every piece of equipment is what ultimately saves on time and avoids costly mistakes.

## THE CLOCK STARTS TICKING

What made this project particularly challenging was the lack of a solid utility infrastructure. Everything from the floor drains to the gas lines were not readily available when construction efforts began. At most, the space may have had a handful of convenience outlets to work with. Every other utility feature needed to be installed for this space to be run as an effective kitchen.

**"I've done several renovations with both Bob Mills and Tommy Burruss. They both understand the industry, are professionals and are great to work with. The relationship that Boelter has been building with this team is very promising for the future."** – Russ Streett, Project Manager, Boelter

Leading up to those final days of in-session school, the required utilities were brought up to the building after hours. This level of preparation and planning helped to ensure that the moment school was done for the year, the construction crew could enter the space and begin immediately updating the utility infrastructure. Understanding that there was essentially zero lag time, a large effort was applied to the exterior work that helped to make the first day of the remodel as productive as it could be. Every detail was significantly mapped out in advance.

**“We are very thankful for the efforts of New South Construction and for Boelter. They were actively involved in pre coordination meetings, understood the sensitivity of this project and that it shouldn’t be approached as a normal construction site or a normal kitchen installation. The nuances of this project were fully identified. Everybody had a chance to weigh in on what their needs were and what their pressure points were going to be based on the tight schedule.” – Bob Mills, President, UDS Development Services**

Russ Streett’s primary focus was to review the design of this new space and specify the various kitchen equipment that would eventually be installed. With time being a major factor, there was very little room for error.

**“I can’t really say enough good things about Russ. In this business, you work with a lot of different people, and you rely on a lot of different people. And sometimes those people are truly worthy of trust. Russ is a professional that is at the very top of his form.” – Bob Mills, President, UDS Development Services**

When installing commercial kitchen equipment, measurements are usually taken from the finished walls and floors. This yields the most accurate dimensions and identifies the best piece of equipment to be installed. Because of the various moving pieces and additional space being added to accommodate for a variety of utilities, Russ had to work from early measurements that could change as construction

progressed. Walls could be built out, flooring could change and the total amount of headroom could be altered. Waiting for this work to finish before ordering the kitchen equipment and beginning fabrication was a luxury Russ did not have.

**“From a coordination standpoint, Russ was able to take the equipment that was selected, develop a rough-in plan, identify every connection point for the electrical, plumbing, gas, and water, and tie that to something that we could lay out. That was extraordinarily helpful. From a General Contractor side of things, it was absolutely invaluable.”**

*– Tommy Burruss, Assistant Project Manager at New South Construction*

In addition to the procurement and installation of the various kitchen equipment – walk-in coolers, combo coolers, combi-ovens, convection ovens, griddles, electric fryers, and skillets – Russ took the lead on developing the fabrication work for a large counter space along the serving line. Both the base and the drop-ins were prepared and made available for the final millwork to be built around. A quartz countertop was also fastened to finish things off. Everything was heavily coordinated between the individual trades to accommodate for accurate dimensions and expedited timing of delivery, set up and installation.

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## FINISHING TOUCHES

As a final push to ensure all equipment was functioning as expected, Russ scheduled time before the opening of the new school year to meet with the kitchen staff and provide additional hands-on training with the equipment manufacturers. Aramark and Hobart operators visited Pace Academy's new commercial kitchen and provided the walkthrough and necessary demonstrations to bring all kitchen staff up-to-speed on the equipment, answer questions about their functions and limitations, and advise of any follow-up warranty service that may come into play.

**"Although it took some time to get the kitchen approved by the health department, the inspection ended up scoring one hundred. That's great! That's a testament to people paying attention to the details and not just mailing it in."**

– Bob Mills, President, UDS Development Services

Time was a precious commodity during the development of Pace Academy's new commercial kitchen. It was consistently in the back of everyone's minds. The role of a smoothly run kitchen and the quality of food that is prepared plays a part in the success of a child's education during the school year. The biggest challenge – and the number one priority throughout – was making sure that the project was complete and the kitchen operational in time for the students to begin the new semester. The efforts of this project management team helped to position Pace Academy and the entire student body for continued success well into the future.



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