

# THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

NOVEMBER, 2007

## Chatham U. Transforms a Historic Pool Into a Conference Room



Andrew Mellon's mansion in Pittsburgh was thought to have one of the first residential indoor pools – a space featuring the same kind of intricate, interlocking Gustavino tile work that one sees all over New York. In 1941, when the Mellons gave the mansion to the Pennsylvania College for Women (known today as Chatham University), the small pool continued to be used by students.

It closed in 2004, when the university built a new athletic facility. Over the years, the room had lost its luster. Humidity and begun to destroy the intricate woodwork in the building, and the tile grout had turned black from

years of exposure to Pittsburgh sooty industrial air. In 2006, Chatham hired Rothschild Doyno Architects, a Pittsburgh firm, to help figure out a new use for the space.

Today, the old pool area is Chatham's newest conference room. The renovation strove to preserve the room's signature feature, the vaulted Gustavino tile. Renovators regouted it and replaced some broken pieces.

Sandstone balustrades had crumbled with time; renovators replaced them with sturdier limestone. New doors were crafted by Arimoto Design and Woodworking from sustainably

harvested mahogany. The renovation also reopened a set of windows that had been covered by mechanical equipment were discovered by the heating and cooling system. Some of the walls were covered with sound-absorbing panels; the tile walls tend to give the room a hollow sound.

The renovation also included new landscaping that involved lowering the surrounding land to let in more light and provide better access for those with disabilities.