

# Phc News

plumbing & hydronic contractor news

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## Oberlin college dorm goes green

*Gross Plumbing helps historic dormitory achieve efficient water heating*

Founded in 1833, Oberlin College, a top-ranking liberal arts college located approximately 35 miles southwest of Cleveland, has maintained a reputation for progressive thinking. The aggressive pursuit of “green” options — when it comes to retrofitting the buildings on campus — is just an example.

Thought to have been built as a hotel in the late 1800s, the Johnson House dormitory needed a new water heating solution to satisfy the demand of 30 students that call it home. The students share five showers, 11 sinks and a laundry room. The college wanted a practical, yet green technology to fulfill the need.

Rick Gerena, skilled trades manager at Oberlin College, enlisted the help of Dan Gross of Gross Plumbing Inc., a third-generation plumbing, HVAC and fire protection contractor that does new construction or renovation work for commercial jobs to find him the answer.

In the Johnson House’s retrofit, Gerena had three objectives for Gross:

- Keep operating and maintenance costs low;
- Find an easy replacement to the current system with a 100-gallon storage tank with minimal impact to the building; and
- The new unit must be green and leave the smallest carbon footprint as practical.

After much deliberation, Gross chose to install Grand Hall’s Eternal Hybrid Water Heater for this project. Since Gross was concerned with Gerena’s objectives, he worked hard to find the right solution. The Eternal was chosen for its energy efficiency, environmental friendliness and lowered project cost. He found that one Eternal could handle the diversified load, whereas several instantaneous heaters would have been required. As an added benefit, the maintenance department of the college was pleased with the lack of required flushing maintenance.

In addition, SCAQMD stipulates that water heaters must emit less than 55ppm NOx in order to meet the low emissions standard. As one of the cleanest gas burning appliances, Eternal emits as low as just 5ppm NOx, which makes it an extremely green choice in the water heating category.

The old system was located in the basement and had not been removed because the dorm had plenty of space. However, the installation of the compact new Eternal was easy due to its PVC venting, sim-



*Oberlin College’s Johnson House dormitory needed a new water heating solution to satisfy the demand of 30 students.*



*Rick Gerena (l) and Dan Gross chose the Eternal Hybrid Water Heater for its energy efficiency, environmental friendliness and lowered project cost.*

ple piping and the common ground-level plug electrical requirement. With two plumbers on the job, the entire project was completed in approximately one day.

Gerena has been very pleased with Gross Plumbing’s work. Not only has Gross met his objectives, but he also kept costs under control. In fact, Gerena recently compared the gas bills and saw that the new system used 70% less gas in some months than the building’s old system did a year prior. Gerena said that there are several buildings on

campus in the process of retrofitting, and he’ll definitely be calling Gross again.

“We recognized that Eternal is truly an energy efficient, low maintenance water heater that has all the advantages of instantaneous heaters with none of the drawbacks. It is easier and cheaper to install and we see it as the future of water heating.

“We believe that by selling the customer a product that cost them less to operate and own, we are going to keep that customer loyal and satisfied,” said Gross. ■