## RESOURCE IDENTIFICATION

- **Current building name:** Esslinger (Arthur A.) Hall
- **Historic building name:** Physical Education
- **Building address:** 1525 University Street
- **Ranking:** Tertiary

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

- **Architectural style classification:** Moderne
- **Building plan (footprint shape):** Irregular L-shaped
- **Number of stories:** 1.5
- **Foundation material(s):** Poured concrete
- **Primary exterior wall material:** Poured concrete with stucco finish
- **Secondary exterior wall material:** N/A
- **Roof configuration/type:** Flat
- **Primary roof material:** Elastic sheet roofing
- **Primary window type:** Grouped hinged sash
- **Primary window material:** Wood
- **Decorative features and materials:** Doors, concrete detailing around doors, gutters, paneling of concrete, planters at main entrance
- **Landscape features:** Oaks at the entrance and shrubs in planting strip alongside west elevation, cast stone urns by PWA artist Walter Pritchard, bike racks on North Side
- **Associated resources:** University Street Axis, connected to McArthur Court at southwest and Student Recreation Center at the northeast
- **Comments:** The building is a low, horizontal, poured concrete structure that is simply but elegantly detailed. The building’s decoration is furnished by the groupings of windows, geometric patterns in the doors and transom panels above the doors, and patterns in the concrete.

## ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

- **Date of construction:** 1936
- **Architect:** Lawrence, Holford, & Allyn
- **Builder/Contractor:** Ross B. Hammond, General Contractor; Poole & McConigle, Inc., Structural Steel
- **Moved? (yes/no):** No
- **Date of move(s):** N/A
- **Description/dates of major additions/alterations:** Esslinger Hall has been remodeled periodically. The most significant alterations were the addition of a second story administrative wing, construction of the Leighton Pool, and connection to the Student Recreation Center. For details on the remodels and other alterations refer to Continuation Sheet 1.
**HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS & SIGNIFICANCE**

Original use(s) or function(s): Men’s Physical Education  
Current use(s) or function(s): Physical Education

Area(s) of significance: Education, Architecture, Social History  
Period of significance: 1936

Statement of Significance (use continuation sheet if necessary):

The Physical Education Building is a good example of the association between campus planner and architect Ellis Lawrence with the Public Works Administration (PWA). The PWA provided the funding for the construction of the Physical Education Building and other projects built on the campus during the 1930s. The restrained quality of the building conforms to the PWA guidelines for economy as well as a growing trend in architecture toward simple forms. Esslinger Hall is a low, horizontal, poured concrete structure that is simply but elegantly detailed. The building’s decoration is furnished by the groupings of windows, geometric patterns in the doors and transom panels above the doors, and patterns in the concrete. Detailing of the concrete provides the building’s primary ornament. The detailing emphasizes the horizontality of the site with contrasting vertical elements highlighting the entries. The combinations of octagons and rectangles in the doors along with the horizontal band of rectangular, grouped hinged sash windows are in keeping with the emphasis on simple geometries in the Moderne style. Although the Physical Education Building is the only Lawrence project on the Oregon campus to employ the Moderne style, the massing and refined detailing is characteristic of Lawrence’s work throughout the campus.

The original building contained two basketball courts, eight handball/squash courts, locker rooms, and office space. During construction, the building was attached to the existing McArthur Court by a set of doors at the southwest corner. Modifications include the addition of a second story administrative wing in 1954, construction of the swimming pool in 1958, and the remodeling of the second story to repair damage resulting from the 1971 fire. In 1975, the University renamed the building in honor of the contributions of Arthur A. Esslinger during his service as Dean of the College of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation from 1953 until 1971. The continuing growth of athletics and physical education at the University prompted the construction of the Student Recreation and Fitness Center in 1999 (designed by TBG Architects of Eugene and Cannon-Parkin of Los Angeles) which is attached to Esslinger Hall at the northeast corner.

Esslinger Hall has fair integrity. The connection of Esslinger Hall to the Recreation Center altered the north elevation of the building but the principle entry façade on the west remains intact. Updates to the interiors conform to the spatial arrangements and material quality specified by Ellis Lawrence in 1936. Esslinger Hall is well maintained and in good condition. Although it is simple in design (Criterion C), Esslinger Hall reflects the importance of athletics at the University of Oregon, as well as tell the story of the broader influence of the PWA on the design of public buildings in the United States during the 1930s (Criterion A). It has relatively low significance when considered with other campus buildings, therefore making it a tertiary resource.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENT**

Historic Significance (check one): _ High _ Medium X Low __ Very Low or None

Integrity (check one): _ Excellent _ Good X Fair _ Poor

Condition (check one): _ Excellent X Good _ Fair _ Poor

Building designation: _ City Landmark _ National Register _ National Historic Landmark X Not listed

Preliminary National Register eligibility findings

Building is potentially eligible: _ Individually or X As a contributing resource in a district only

If eligible individually, applicable criteria (check all that apply):

_ A. Associated with significant events _ C. Distinctive architecturally
_ B. Associated with significant persons _ D. Archaeologically important

If applicable, building qualifies under NR Criterion Considerations: _ Yes _ No If yes, which apply:

Building is NOT eligible: _ Intact but lacks distinction or _ Altered/loss of integrity or _ Not 50 years old
DOCUMENTATION

Indicate resources consulted when researching this building (check all that apply):

- University archives
- Sanborn maps
- State Archives
- Local Historic Society
- Biographical encyclopedias
- UO Planning Office files
- Building permits
- State Library
- Personal interviews
- Obituary indexes
- Newspapers
- SHPO files
- State Historic Society
- Historic photographs
- Other see below

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Books


Facilities Services Project Manuals


Guides


RECORDING INFORMATION

Researched: Jennifer L. Flathman, Erin Pochert, 01-02-2006
Recorded: Susan Johnson and University Planning Office, Summer 2006
Photo number or name: Esslingercropped.jpg
Cast Stone Urns flank the entrance

Pyramidal English Oak

connection to McArthur Court in 1954

McArthur Court

Student Recreation Center 1999

Esslinger Hall 1938

University St.
Continuation Sheet 1

Section Architectural History

1954 Construction of 2nd Story Administrative offices
1958 Construction of Leighton swimming pool
1961 Remodeling of Human Performance Lab
1964 Installation of new floor
1970 Repairing and cleaning of exterior, reglazing of windows
1971 Fire
1975 Creation of women’s locker room
1978 Upgrade to Fire Protection Systems
1985 Retrofits to ductwork as part of Energy Conservation Measures
1995 Remodeling for Academic Counseling Center including air distribution system and finish materials
1998 Installation of new roof
1999 Joining with Student Recreation Center addition