Recreational Architecture
Metal was an important factor in the aesthetics of the 151,000 sq. ft. East Campus Recreation Center at the University of Illinois at Chicago. University representatives wanted the recreation center to be a focal point and gateway to the campus. While there were initial concerns about the use of metal, particularly on the east wall, in the end, the materials were found to be appropriate to the building type.

Because of the many folds and bends in the façade, the architect, the Chicago office of PSA-Dewberry, used two different metal skins to create a sense of dynamic movement, and varied texture and color to represent the functions within the building. Site clearing for the $29 million project began in September 2004.

For the ribbed panels, McElroy Metal manufactured 25,000 sq. ft. of 22-gauge Galvalume Plus steel Multi-Cor wall panels. McElroy also manufactured the Galvalume steel corrugated metal wall panels as well as 22-gauge Galvalume steel Marquee II fascia/soffit panels. Alcoa Architectural Products manufactured the Reynobond 4mm aluminum composite panel system in Gun Metal, which was fabricated by Shaffner Heaney Associates.
The exposed fasteners on the Multi-Cor panel added another level of detail to the wall. Careful consideration was taken to ensure the lines of screws were straight and parallel with each other.

Some of the materials used by PSA-Dewberry were different than one would normally see architects choose, such as the thicker, 22-gauge material. Architect Christopher Frye said thicker material was chosen "to address issues about durability and warranty, along with a concern about the appearance of a large flat wall along a major highway." He chose the deep-rib panels for "texture and economy, as related to the composite panels."

While many times scale is a concern with big expanses of wall, PSA-Dewberry wanted to be honest as to what the facility was about, so the only area that was broken-down was the entry. Each of the other walls were given an independent identity. Frye added, "Each façade is deliberately addressed to provide specific reads of the facility, aiding the viewer to easily comprehend the building quickly."

Construction was completed in March 2006. Power Construction, Schaumberg, IL, acted as general contractor. Lake Zurich, IL-based All American Exterior Solutions was the metal wall panel installer.

Used with permission from Metal Architecture-website only