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Peter Wolf stands in front of a new building that was put up and able to use within a month.

Reusable modular buildings offer a temporary alternative

By Christy L. Cain
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It took just 30 days for two new buildings to be situated at Chaminade University, with both matching the Spanish mission-style architecture of the campus.

These modular buildings were built in California, shipped to Hawaii and assembled on school grounds.

The two buildings, totaling more than 7,600 square feet, were dropped in by crane and assembled by six workers, just in time for the first day of class. Arched red-tile roofs were used to match existing buildings.

"We needed space and we needed it fairly quickly. In terms of the permitting process, it seemed to be more effective and quicker," university spokesman Peter Wolf says.

The need for quick-fix solutions has allowed the modular building industry to expand. The generic buildings of the past have been replaced by innovative and more elaborate designs.

In the last three or four years, customers are recognizing the need for a higher-end product, says Mike Fox, president of Hawaii Modular Space, the company that assembled the Chaminade buildings.

"We can customize things," Fox says. "The level of quality has gone up."

A foundation is built under the unit and the building assembled so it can be taken apart and relocated.

"The beauty of modular buildings is their use can last as long as conventional construction, given the same maintenance, because they are built with the same materials," Fox says. "Should they decide to relocate, they don't have to demolish them. They can be taken apart as easily as they can be assembled."

Modular buildings can be financed, leased or rented, with prices ranging from \$60 to \$100 per square foot, Fox says.

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