





First Impressions

Windows and Doors That Define a Campus

BY ED BAUER

The windows and doors of a college campus are more than just functional components; they are essential elements that contribute to both the aesthetic appeal and the overall experience for students, faculty, and visitors. These features, while not always consciously registered, play a crucial role in setting the tone and conveying the institution's identity.

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For private higher education facility managers, ensuring that these essential components are both aesthetically pleasing and highly functional is a critical part of campus planning and design.

Where Function Meets Aesthetics

A door is more than a way in and out—it is a transition, an experience. It sets expectations for what lies beyond. Whether it's a grand double-door entry to an administrative building, a sleek automatic sliding door at a modern science center, or the weathered wooden doors of an historic chapel, the entrance tells a story.

Doors should fit the architecture and the purpose of the building. A residence hall entrance requires secure access control,

while a performing arts center may call for striking, oversized doors that invite curiosity. Here are some key design considerations:

Material choices: Traditional wooden doors offer a sense of heritage and academia, while glass doors convey transparency and openness.

Security and access control: Keycard access, biometric scanners, and motion-sensing doors provide both safety and convenience for students and staff.

Durability and maintenance: Heavy-use doors in student unions and athletic facilities need to withstand frequent wear and tear while maintaining a polished look.

Some institutions, like Stanford University, have invested in custom-designed doors that reflect their branding and history, using etched glass and carved wood to tie modernity with tradition.

The Evolution of Doors: Beyond the Basics

Over the years, doors on many campuses have transformed into sophisticated, multi-functional elements of building design. Consider:

Energy efficiency: Thermal-insulated doors reduce heat loss, contributing to overall campus sustainability efforts.

Automation and accessibility: Power-assisted doors, automatic sliders, and ADA-compliant entrances improve campus inclusivity.

Smart technology integration: Some

universities have installed doors with facial recognition and mobile phone access, streamlining security and access control.

At Harvard University, advancements in door technology have enhanced energy efficiency in dormitories, with new insulated models significantly reducing heating and cooling costs.

Windows: More Than Just a View

Windows are the unsung heroes of campus architecture. They shape interior spaces, provide natural light, and, if thoughtfully selected, enhance energy efficiency. Over the years, window technology has evolved to become a major contributor to sustainability. In fact, modern advancements can turn many windows into energy-saving powerhouses:

Low-E coatings: These coatings minimize heat transfer, keeping buildings cool in *continued...*

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summer and warm in winter.

Triple-pane glass: Increasing insulation and reducing outside noise, these windows are ideal for lecture halls and libraries.

Smart windows: Some institutions, like the University of California, Berkeley, have experimented with electrochromic windows that adjust their tint based on sunlight exposure, reducing glare and improving energy efficiency.

The Importance of Daylighting in Campus Buildings

Daylighting—the use of natural light to illuminate interior spaces—is a crucial element in modern campus design. Studies show that students perform better in naturally lit environments, experiencing improved mood, focus, and overall well-being:

Health benefits: Exposure to natural light helps regulate circadian rhythms, improving

sleep and concentration.

Energy savings: Strategically placed windows reduce the need for artificial lighting, cutting energy costs.

Architectural impact: Floor-to-ceiling windows create dynamic, inviting spaces that foster collaboration.

At the University of Michigan, a recent renovation project incorporated expansive windows in classroom buildings, increasing daylight penetration and reducing the use of overhead lighting by 40 percent.

Balancing Tradition with Innovation

Private colleges often have the challenge of maintaining historic architecture while implementing modern efficiencies. Restoring and retrofitting older buildings with updated doors and windows allows institutions to preserve their aesthetic while improving sustainability.

Some universities, like Yale, have undertaken massive restoration projects where century-old windows were replaced with modern, high-performance replicas—keeping the historical charm intact while drastically improving insulation and energy efficiency.

Investing in First Impressions

Campus doors and windows do more than just separate the inside from the outside, they define an experience. For facility managers, investing in high-quality, functional, and aesthetically pleasing entrances and windows is a strategic decision that affects security, energy consumption, and campus appeal. Whether through the grand doors of an administrative building or the daylight-filled atriums of a student center, these architectural elements are the gateway to a lasting impression.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Ed Bauer has been in publishing for over twenty years. In his early career years, he worked on the staff at Mount Union College and for the last twelve years as publisher and managing partner at Flaherty Media has been privileged to tour many private higher education campuses and talk with numerous staff members who manage these multiple building facilities. He can be reached at ed@pupnmag.com.



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