

JUNE 2012

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**RIGHT + BELOW** Lambert Architecture + Interiors adopted the Georgian Revival style of architecture seen throughout the Wake Forest campus for the school's new welcome center.

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*"Just in the last couple years, we're seeing welcome centers as sort of dedicated spaces."*

—Jean Carroon, FAIA, LEED, principal with Boston-based firm Goody Clancy



**BE WARM AND ACCESSIBLE**

As the number of visitors and applications began to rise at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, N.C., they began to have more staff and filing space needs. "They needed more space but really liked the smaller, cozy atmosphere of the building they were in," says Heather McCanna, interior designer with Lambert Architecture + Interiors, which designed the school's new welcome center.

The project originally began as a study regarding an addition to the building the admissions department

was previously housed in, but administrators at Wake Forest ultimately decided against it, as it wouldn't have supported the school's workflow. "They wanted a building that reflected the character of the school. That smaller, warm feeling was one of the aesthetics we were after," McCanna notes.

The Virginia Tech visitor center is built right on the edge of campus and off of a main highway. "You get off the exit and within a quarter of a mile, you come to our visitor center, so it's really convenient for people," says Larry Hincker,

associate vice president for university relations. And while Virginia Tech is a larger university, it's known for cultivating a small-town campus feel, he explains. "The center is another way we can inoculate someone into that special Virginia Tech experience."

**CONNECT WITH THE CAMPUS**

Whether it's via a view or the use of cohesive materials, a welcome center should always have a strong association with the rest of the campus and its buildings.



• **ABOVE** Wake Forest's welcome center provides a variety of spaces to accommodate everything from individual meetings to large group gatherings.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RH WILSON PHOTOGRAPHY

• **BELOW** Creating a range of bright, warm interiors was a priority in the design of Wake Forest's center

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RH WILSON PHOTOGRAPHY



The Wake Forest welcome center maintains the Georgian Revival style of the campus, while Virginia Tech's features the same Southwest Virginia limestone all of the school's structures are known for.

The Virginia Tech visitor center is also situated on a hill high above the rest of the campus, which Glavé & Holmes wanted to use to their advantage. Two stories of glass in the lobby and the conference rooms provide a dramatic look down onto the campus. In the reception area, information-intensive electronic kiosks also connect guests to the campus below. Touchscreens ranging from 50-60 inches provide maps of the university, information about student living and various degree programs, among other information.

**BRIDGE THE OLD WITH THE NEW**

Creating buildings that retain the tradition of a campus' architecture on the outside while incorporating newer technologies on the inside (such as the latest in A/V in larger presentation spaces) is a great way to attract potential students. "It's so important to students to feel the place they are coming to is cutting-edge," says Vanessa Vinsant, interior designer with Glavé & Holmes. "So we have larger presentation spaces where we can seat anywhere from 5-100 students. They get a sense of awe and potential." On the opposite end of the spectrum, designers also provided Virginia

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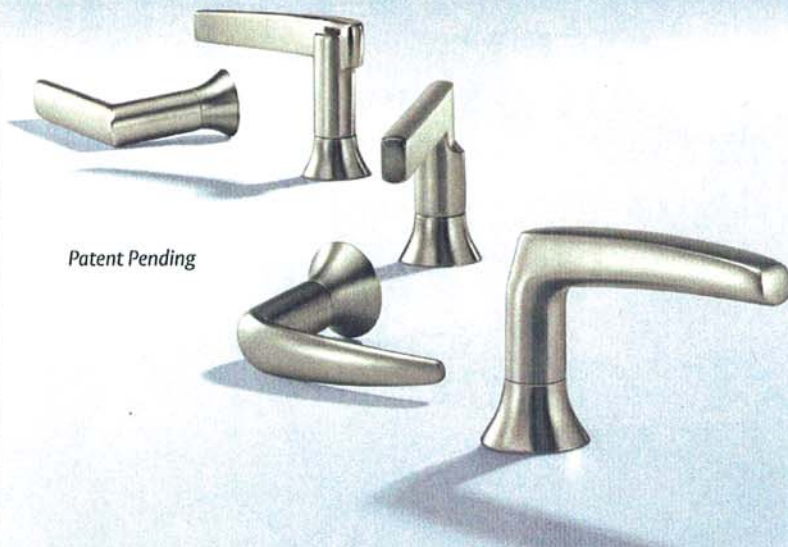
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Tech staffers with smaller interview rooms and offices to give students the individualized experience they desire.

Many centers are also integrating other departments into these spaces, such as the offices of alumni relations and graduate admissions, in an effort to connect students with the school's history.

"Every university is different, and in the case of the welcome center at Wake Forest, that is specifically for undergraduate admissions. It includes all of the components that parents and potential students would need for their visit, which is large and small meeting rooms and auditoriums, interview rooms, dean and counselor private offices, and open office space for application processors," says McCanna.


**INJECT SCHOOL PRIDE—CAREFULLY**

"It was certainly a challenge," says Vinsant of integrating Virginia Tech's classic maroon and orange school colors into its visitor center.

"How much do you use campus colors without seeming cheesy? At the same time, people expect to see references to maroon and orange, so we figured out some clever ways to do that," she adds.



Subtle references were made in the bathrooms and the backsplash behind the coffee bar in the reception area, thanks to a stone mosaic that has orange and rust-red colored pieces throughout. The design team also specified carpet tiles that include slight variations on the school's iconic colors.

"It's a nice reinforcement of using the idea of university colors," Vinsant says. "Collegiate colors are the most readily identifiable marketing tool for any university." 



TOP + ABOVE Designers with Glavé & Holmes incorporated Virginia Tech's trademark colors into its visitor center through the use of subtle color variations in carpeting, upholstery and surfacing materials.



Have any more suggestions on how to design a truly engaging welcome center? Share them on our LinkedIn page.

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