

The Importance of The Lobby

By Jason Cochran

What makes an environment inviting? I think environments that are boring can be the most inviting. A room that has just enough to avoid being empty has the potential to be anything you make of it. For me, this room is the room between the hallways of my dorms. It doesn't even have any name that I'm aware of, so I call it the lobby.

The room itself is not remarkable. It has three kinds of chairs, although none are particularly comfortable. Some are low to the ground and have wheels, some are high up like bar stools, and others are more like living room chairs. The chairs, carpets, and walls are all either light or dark blue. The room has about forty chairs in total, and is the size of three or four student dorm rooms. Besides being the room separating the two sides of the floor, the room also has entrances to the stairway and elevator, a water fountain, some treadmills, and a maintenance closet. There is a corkboard with the room inventory next to the television. The only thing posted is the room inventory, the same as every other room in the building.

On my first day, the room was intimidating. I passed through it about a half-dozen times while unpacking. It did not help me during the emotional rollercoaster of saying goodbye to my parents. Walking through it as I grew more and more upset made me feel abandoned. It was as if I had worked my whole life just to say goodbye to everyone I knew for a dystopian McDonalds playpen. But after I was done unpacking and brooding in my room, I went back into the main room to be greeted by the only person I had known from high school. Seeing my old friend suddenly made the room a lot brighter! One of the RAs had set up their gaming console on the television, and my friend and I spent about an hour and a half playing video games without even

realizing. It was a game I had never heard of and we were not good at it. However, being with my friend got me to open up more, which then led to us talking more with the RAs.

Suddenly, the room was much more inviting! It no longer felt like I had been left behind in a cheap modern hotel. And while the room itself still isn't bursting with life, I have passed through when it is lively. Most days, people will be in the room playing music and talking, or eating, or watching football on the flatscreen. Aside from just passing through when others were there, I've had some interesting moments in the room. One night, my friends and I spelled out messages on the tables using a huge stack of Uno cards left in the room. We would leave a message and come back to a new one! This went on for about five messages before the cards were cleaned up and put away by whoever owned them. Another night, my friend was trying to chase me around the room. Neither of us can actually run fast, so I made use of the many rolling chairs to create a more interesting game. I pushed them across the room and used them to block paths between the other chairs so she couldn't get me.

It is those almost meaningless interactions that give the room so much meaning to me. What started out as a room that made me uncomfortable became a room that makes me feel at home. The room started as a boring blank slate, and through decorating it with my own experiences, I was able to make it comfortable and exciting. I know that some of my peers can say the same about this room!