

Commons GOALS

The former Frederick Douglass Building has been transformed into a new, student-oriented campus hub.

A freshly remodeled Frederick Douglass Building is bringing Rochester's student-oriented spaces into a new era. Now known as Douglass Commons, the 60-year-old building has been recast to provide more inviting ways for students to take part in cocurricular programs and to provide better support for the more than 250 campus organizations that form much of the backbone of student life.

Richard Feldman, dean of the College, says the reopening represents a new way of thinking about the role of such a campus hub. "Until now, a student-centered space of this magnitude has not existed on campus," Feldman says. "The building's redesign represents an effort to increase student connections, establish a strong sense of community, and foster diversity."

Officially opened during a 10-day celebration last fall, the 79,000-square-foot building is the latest development in the University's long history of providing students with places on campus to call their own. Todd Union, Rochester's first student union, was one of the original buildings when the River Campus opened in 1930. When the men's college moved from the Prince Street Campus, Cutler Union was built as a "home of gracious hospitality" for the women's college.

And since 1976, the iconic, I. M. Pei-designed Wilson Commons has been a centerpiece of River Campus life, a role that Douglass Commons is designed to expand and augment.


While Douglass has most recently been known for its dining center and as the home of the bookstore, those spaces have been recast.

The bookstore, which had been on the first floor, has moved to a new building in College Town, a commercial development on University-owned land at Mt. Hope and Elmwood Avenues. In its place is a new, updated dining center.

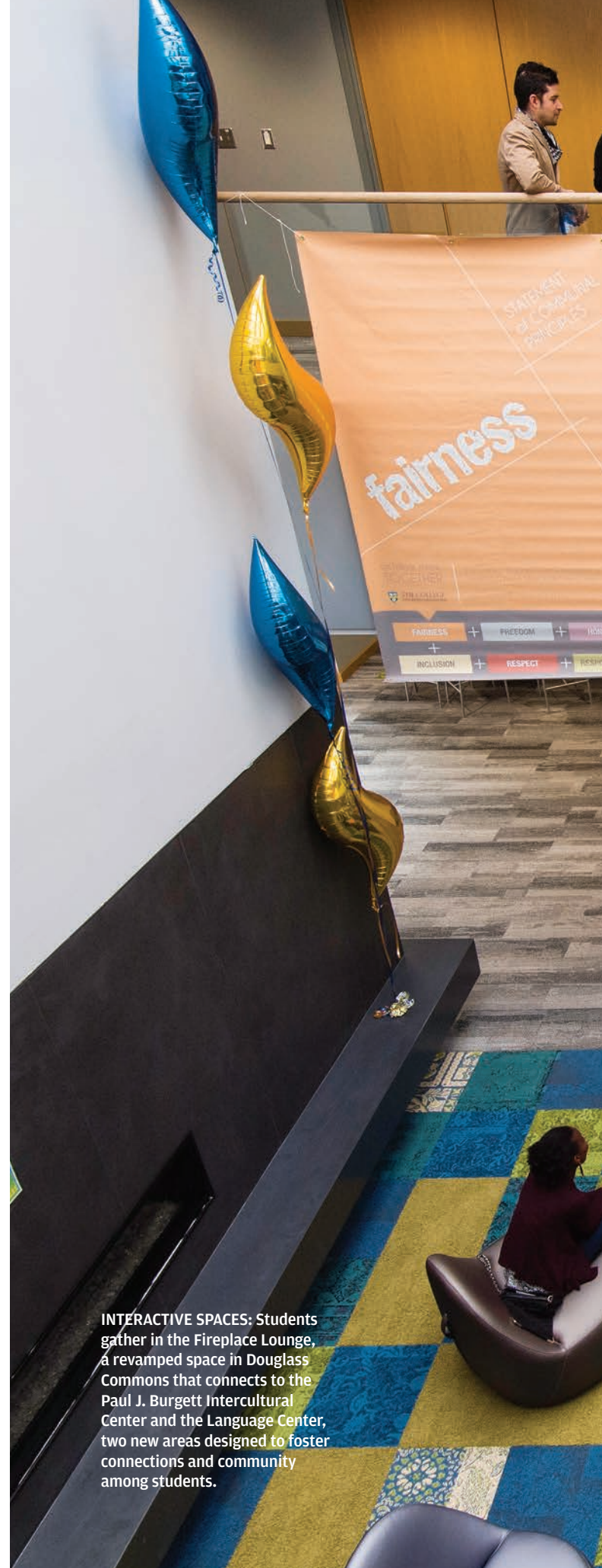
The old second-floor dining hall has become a new ballroom, a flexible, reconfigurable facility for students and campus organizations to hold events and activities.

And other spaces have been reinvented to provide greater support for initiatives that promote cultural awareness and engagement.

Connected by a walkway to Wilson Commons and to Rush Rhees Library, Douglass Commons and Wilson Commons together are known as the Campus Center. The centrality is intentional, Feldman says.

"It's a unifying place for students to come together to celebrate their identities and to share in both intellectual and cultural experiences together." 

—JIM MANDELARO



INTERACTIVE SPACES: Students gather in the Fireplace Lounge, a revamped space in Douglass Commons that connects to the Paul J. Burgett Intercultural Center and the Language Center, two new areas designed to foster connections and community among students.



STATEMENT OF COMMUNAL PRINCIPLES

freedom

USE MOVIE MORE TOGETHER

THE COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

BUSINESS + FREEDOM + HONESTY
+
INCLUSION + RESPECT + RESPONSIBILITY

STATEMENT OF COMMUNAL PRINCIPLES

honesty

USE MOVIE MORE TOGETHER

THE COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

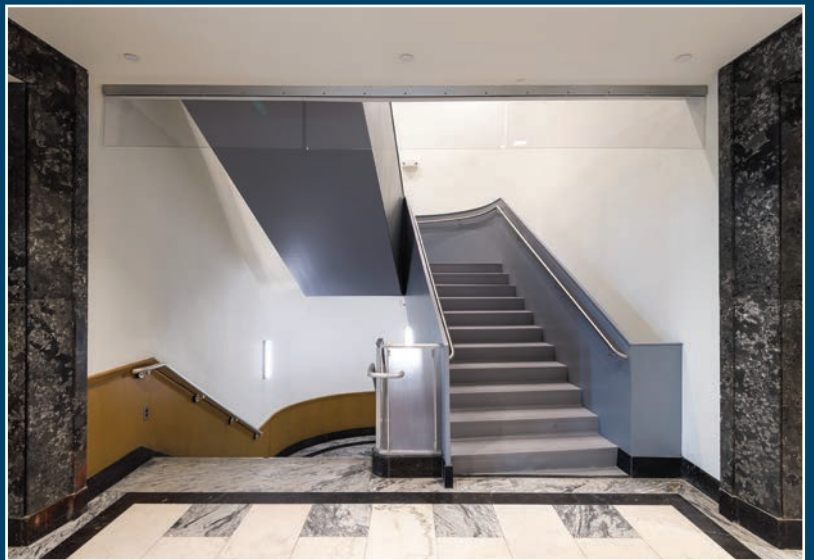
HONESTY + FREEDOM + BUSINESS
+
RESPONSIBILITY + RESPECT + INCLUSION



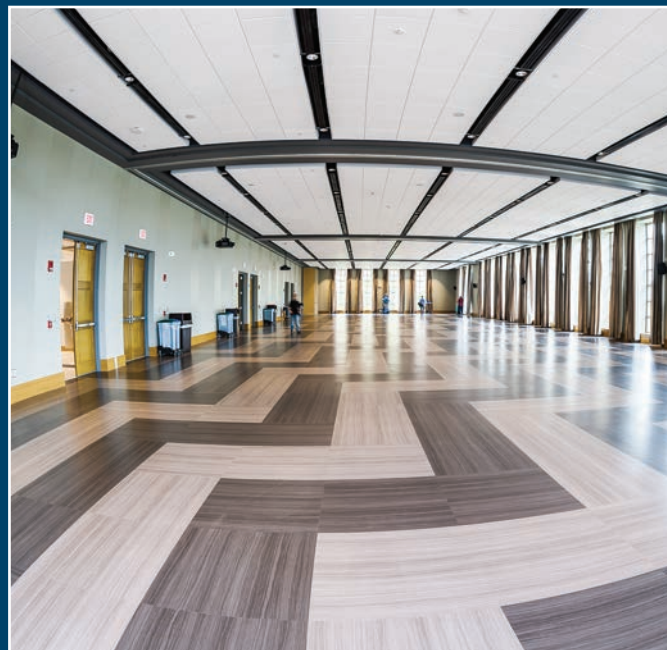
COMMONS & COMMUNITY:

The building includes a revamped dining center (top) that features more options for students, particularly those with dietary and allergy concerns, and a community kitchen (lower right), where student organizations can make their own food as part of their plans for meetings and events. Throughout the building, historical touches, like the bust of the building's namesake (lower left), have been preserved.

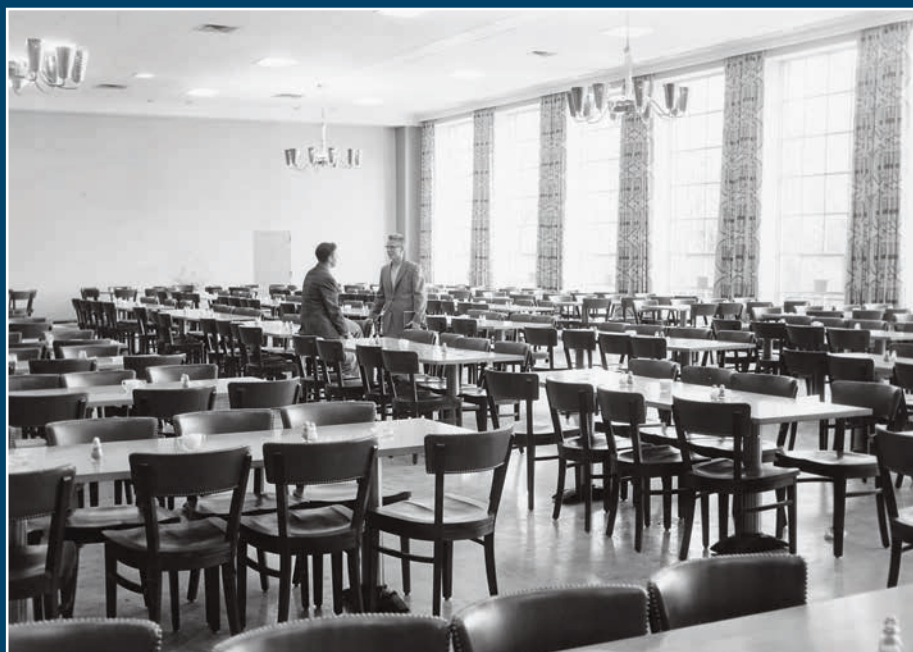




BUILDING ON TRADITION: Architectural flourishes—like the winding staircase (top) and skylights (bottom)—have been burnished, while new spaces for programs like the Burgett Intercultural Center (middle) have been created. The center, along with a new Language Center, is designed to help celebrate the diversity of Rochester’s students and to bolster initiatives for students to share cultural experiences.



STUDENT SKYLINES: Part of the original River Campus, Todd Union (top) “quickly proved its worth for the general life of the students,” according to historian Arthur May. The same could be said about successive student spaces, including Cutler Union (middle), which “was easily the most distinctive and significant of the new facilities,” built when the Prince Street Campus became home to the women’s college; and Wilson Commons (bottom), the I. M. Pei-designed River Campus building that opened in 1976.



BETTER BALLROOM: Originally designed as the main dining hall for men on the River Campus (near left) when the building opened in 1955, the second-floor space had done double duty as a meeting room. The area has been revamped into a ballroom (far left) that serves as a gathering space that can be reconfigured to host a wide range of events, including concerts, fairs, expos, lectures, and receptions (above). The room can be configured to accommodate up to 700 people.



LANDMARKS: Opened when the men's and women's colleges merged, the Frederick Douglass Building has been a campus landmark since 1955.

'Reinvented Douglass'

Student life has been undergoing a transformation at the University, highlighted by the renovation of the Frederick Douglass Building into a new student center. The 62-year-old building, best known to recent generations of students as home to a dining center and to the bookstore, has become a campus hub, designed to provide student-oriented spaces for organizations, activities, and programs.

The 79,000-square-foot building features four floors of space, including the new Paul J. Burgett Intercultural Center, a new Language Center, a reconfigurable ballroom, and a revamped dining center. The University Bookstore has moved to College Town. Together, Douglass Commons and Wilson Commons form what's known as the Campus Center. The buildings are connected by a walkway system that also ties them to the new Evans Lam Square in Rush Rhees Library.

A Public Lounge



Douglass Commons

Third floor

Home to the Burgett Center, the third floor also includes meditation and lactation rooms and a fireplace lounge with televisions to feature international broadcasts.

Meeting rooms

Meditation room

Bridge to Wilson Commons

B

Wilson Commons

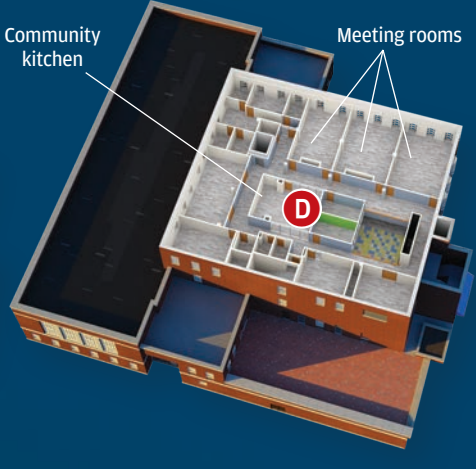
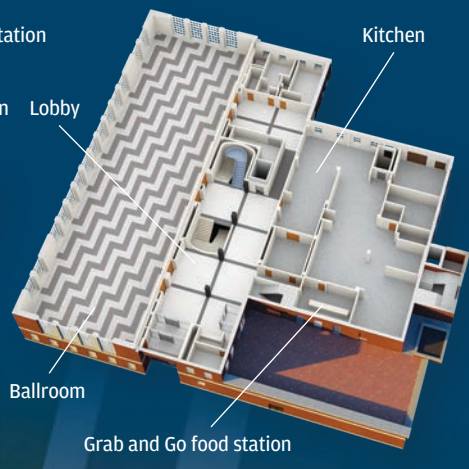
George Graham Smith Plaza

B George Graham Smith Plaza



C Open Dining East





First floor A new dining facility features kosher food, international stations, and allergen-free zones. The Genesee Room doubles as a faculty dining area by day and a student spot at night.

Second floor The centerpiece is the ballroom, a space that holds up to 700 people, and can be used for expos, fairs, rehearsals and performances, concerts, events, and receptions.

Fourth floor The fourth floor features meeting rooms and a large community kitchen, where student organizations can make their own food.

Paul J. Burgett Intercultural Center & Language Center

Public lounge
Fireplace

Bridge to
Rush Rhees Library

Terrace

Lam Square Designed to be a "town square" for the University community, the new space aims to bring together expertise, resources, programming, and technology in Rush Rhees Library.

*Rush Rhees
Library*

D Community Kitchen



E Lam Square

