



# Penn State Schreyer Honors College



## The Challenge

Imparting a sense of belonging was key to the design vision Penn State had for the renovation of the communal area at Schreyer Honors College.

Prior to the renovation, the 3,500 square-foot space, which is located on the ground floor of Atherton Hall, was dated and dimly lit and did not appeal to the Schreyer scholars living at Atherton Hall.

The objective for the project, which eventually became known as "Belonging by Design," was to create a

welcoming, open public space that would attract the scholars, and help them feel accepted and that they belonged there.

"The goal of the university was to update the look and feel of the space to correspond with current student life and the identity and values of the students," explained project architect Lina Abdul-Nabi of Weber Murphy Fox Architects. "They wanted to reset the tone from old and institutional to new and modern with a sense of well-being and community engagement."

## Case Study

**Location:** University Park, PA

**Products:** WoodWorks™ Grille Forté Solid Ceiling/Wall Panels; Ultima® Lay-in and Tegular; Calla® panels; Prelude® XL® 15/16" Exposed Tee; ProjectWorks® Design & Pre-Construction Service

**Architect:** Weber Murphy Fox

## The Solution

The newly renovated space includes a variety of workspaces and seating arrangements, inviting groups of varied sizes to engage with each other. Also included are intimate spaces that provide scholars with the privacy needed to study on their own. The installation of dimmable LED lighting, interesting carpet, and a new Ultima® acoustical ceiling brighten the space, making it more attractive to the scholars.

The addition of WoodWorks™ Grille – Forté solid wood ceiling and wall panels in a Golden Maple finish add warmth and texture and provide a connection to nature. "We introduced wood into the ceilings and walls to create texture and to connect the vertical and horizontal surfaces and create a flowing motion between the two," said Abdul-Nabi.

To create texture, the design team from Weber Murphy Fox specified different heights for the slats in the wood grille panels, using slats 1-3/8 inches deep for the ceiling panels and 2-1/4 inches deep for the wall panels. By installing the panels so that the slats run in a horizontal direction on the ceiling and a vertical direction on the walls, the design team was able to add texture and create interesting ceiling-to-wall transitions. In addition, angles were included in the ceiling design to create more dynamism and movement in the space.

To bring the design concept to life, Weber Murphy Fox collaborated with ProjectWorks®, a complimentary design and pre-construction service offered by Armstrong. ProjectWorks created detailed layouts showing the

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## The Solution (continued)

placement and integration of the wood grille ceiling and wall panels throughout the space, the quantity of each panel size required, and the necessary panel cuts to fit the design's angles. "There are a lot of angles," noted Brandi Beard, Design Analyst at ProjectWorks®. "By adjusting and using different standard wood grille panel sizes based on these angles, we optimized the design and material usage, resulting in less waste."

The WoodWorks™ Grille – Forté ceiling panels are installed in a Prelude® XL® 15/16" Exposed Tee grid system and backed with black Calla® acoustical infill panels to hide the mechanicals in the plenum and provide additional acoustical control.

Integrated with the warm wood grille panels, the smooth, white Ultima® ceiling panels feature Total Acoustics® performance, which provides a combination of both sound absorption and sound blocking, keeping noise levels down and preventing disruption to adjacent spaces. Ultima ceiling panels are also part of the Armstrong® Sustain® portfolio and meet the most stringent industry sustainability compliance standards today.

The improvements, many of which were suggested by the scholars, have resulted in a brighter, more inviting environment, according to Abdul-Nabi. "The students love the new space," she said. "It fosters a sense of well-being and community that the university wanted and creates a sense of belonging for all individuals."



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