

## Rethinking the Campus Design Process of Colorado College

We are having this meeting today as the result of many interactions between students, faculty, and administration which began last year. As members of the Integrative Design Club (IDC), we were asked to participate in the design of a "Tiger Plaza" outside the north entrance to the newly renovated El Pomar. This creative license and desire for collaboration was then shoved away in favor of the original, generic plan despite a presentation by Carl, Luke, Tara, Garrett, and Dru which was received very well by all those related to the project. The Space was described by those involved as the final view of Pikes Peak on campus, the most important outlook over Washburn and into the front range.

It became obvious as we became familiar with the bureaucratic realities of Colorado College campus planning that deadlines and budget feasibility were more important than the future aesthetics of our school and the space in which we live. After this meeting our club began to question for whom the administration was designing. Are these decisions being made to enhance the lives of students on campus, or to draw in future ones? One member of athletics against the Tiger Plaza explained that in his mind the plaza was first and foremost "Commitment Plaza" - a space meant to secure the attendance of athletically gifted students. This mentality easily explains why recent campus decisions seem to be based in establishing Colorado College as a more "impressive," and yet "cookie-cutter" campus.

This disconnect between how Colorado College advertises itself and how we, as a community, actually are is what the IDC is most concerned about. We want to make sure that the school understands what it is and how design decisions can affect our collective experience in both positive and negative ways.

The renovations and construction that we have seen on campus has shown a lack of continuity and appreciation for the personality of our community. For example, the recent Loomis renovation utilizes furniture which seems like it was brought from a different building and hardly enhances the distinct feel of the dorm. In Worner, the decision was made to replace all of the furniture outside of Rastall with cold, backless decor that has left the area desolate of students. Where there was once always a throng of random students watching sports together there is now empty seats.

We feel that there is an opportunity to form a meaningful connection between individuals on campus, the city of Colorado Springs, and the unique physical environment where we have chosen to live through conscious design practices and an honest awareness of who we are.

The first step towards realizing our goal of having a campus which accurately reflects our community is to find out how that community defines itself. Many of the campus plans we have read through state that the goal of the plan is to “reflect the Colorado College community” without even daring to define what that is. This is not a job which can be completed by the IDC, the DRB, or any one group of individuals on campus. This requires soliciting the opinions and thoughts of every individual who regularly experiences this campus with a large emphasis on the student’s opinion.

Second, we need to know the opinions students currently have on the design choices being made on campus. While not every student is able to define good and bad design, they are all able to answer questions such as:

Where do you go to be alone?

Where do you go to be with friends?

Have you ever used the amphitheater?

What brought you to Colorado College in the first place?

These questions are all important because they help campus planners to know what design works and why. Do students actually use all the seating provided for them? Do they feel that something is missing that they have felt or seen on other college or university campuses?

All of this data collection will help us to identify who we are and the community we are designing for. Ultimately, we do believe that design choices can only be made with the students and faculty who live and work on this campus in mind. We realize that the school needs to market itself and create a public image, and we are alright with this reality. We just want to make sure that the image being publicized actually reflects the people it defines.