

Passport Cafe

University of Richmond

Introduction:

When the Passport Café opened in the Carole M. Weinstein International Center in 2010, it was projected to have 250-350 daily transactions. Since the beginning, the café has consistently exceeded these numbers and now does those counts at breakfast alone. After mobile ordering was introduced, sales increased again, and staff found they needed to adapt service space to manage mobile pickups. Despite these shifts, the internationally themed café had not been updated since its opening. Renovation goals included reconfiguring service space for increased sales, mobile pick-up, merchandising behind the line, and a refresh of seating and finishes.

Essay:

To minimize downtime, the renovation took place over the 2023-24 winter break and the start of the 2024 spring semester. Planning began the prior spring with the contracting of the SMBW design firm, which focused on changing front-of-house operations and guest experience through a reconfigured layout, lighting, and finishes. The budget was set at \$310,000.

The former café design featured grab-and-go merchandisers and queuing for ordering and paying at a register. A new layout changed how guests sequence through the space and improved staff support. The café now offers three ways to order: on the mobile app, at a kiosk, or in person at the point of sale (POS). Counter merchandisers, including a baked goods display, are located near the POS. An integrated monitor connected to the mobile service hangs near high-capacity shelving, making the pickup process seamless.

The original interior design was literal in presenting an international theme, featuring maps and wall clocks displaying current times in foreign cities. An illustrative wallpaper now wraps the café, referencing different colors and finishes without being specific to a single culture. Transitions between tile and wood finishes and new lighting now delineate seating and queuing areas.

#### Introduction:

Passport Café is a beloved campus space with an engaging vibe. Our primary marketing goal for the project was to communicate the upcoming renovation before winter break and provide updates throughout the beginning of the spring semester. Students returned to campus with high anticipation, posting on social media about how they were pining for their favorite sandwiches and drinks.

A grand opening was planned for early March. The unadvertised soft opening in late February drew 32 customers in the first 28 minutes, and those numbers were maintained throughout the day. All we had to do was open the door.

#### Essay:

The Passport Café project was a small renovation that significantly impacted and modernized a beloved campus space. The Dining Services marketing team used digital and physical tactics to build excitement around its reopening. Effective marketing resulted in continual increased sales, consistently at 10% ahead of the previous year.

As in 2010, the café was steadily busy, and the grand opening was more of a celebration of the space. Opening week, a social media contest was held for free boba tea coupons. Balloon artists were hired to create columns and bouquets to draw people into the café, where additional balloon bouquets and fresh-cut Gerber daisies were spread throughout. For two days, samplings of Passport's curried chicken salad and popular Passport Palmer drinks were passed as customers waited for their orders. Each order received a branded luggage tag, and guests could enter a drawing for a Samsung tablet.

Passport Café did \$34,000 in sales in its first week and is maintaining that pace today.

"It's got a vibe...it's a real social gathering place. It has a good energy to it," says Karen Kourkoulis, Passport Café's Chef Manager. "It's fun to catch people checking out the wallpaper; it happens every day."

#### Introduction:

In the Carole M. Weinstein International Center, the University of Richmond's Passport Café brings a blend of international cuisines to the university community. The Passport Café renovation relied on that community, utilizing partnerships across campus, each with a role in the project.

Martha Merrit, Dean of the Office of International Education (OIE), awarded Passport a Global Engagement Award in 2022. Her summary of the café's importance in the collaborative effort that is the International Center says it well.

"There is no stronger global awareness and constructive engagement than what happens here in this [café], with astonishing consistency, every day."

#### Essay:

"Dining Services' partnerships were invaluable in making the Passport renovation successful," says Upen Malani, Executive Director of Dining Services. "The overall dining experience is welcoming and resonates with patrons."

##### Office of Sustainability and ReThink Waste

Higher volume in sales required a new way to accommodate waste while adhering to sustainability initiatives. A sorting area with waste containers integrates landfill, recycling, and composting bins, as all packaging, utensils, and drinkware are compostable.

##### Office of International Education

Collaboration with staff in OIE was key because the space is part of the International Center. OIE staff were tapped for

feedback on the renovation and interior design renderings.

#### University Facilities and Telecommunications

Campus architects kept the project moving and delivered it under budget at \$260,000. University telecommunications staff installed digital menu boards, additional screens, and a sound system, modernizing the space.

#### SMBW

The design firm received an Honorable Mention at the ASID VA and IIDA VA's Interior Design Excellence Awards, praising the cafe for its “beautiful, warm, and cozy ambiance, achieved through a thoughtful blend of textures, colors, and finishes that elevate its design. These elements are meticulously curated to evoke an international atmosphere, mirroring the diverse offerings and cultural influences within the café.”

Log in to [nacufs.awardsplatform.com](https://nacufs.awardsplatform.com) to see complete entry attachments.



Passport Cafe  
BEFORE



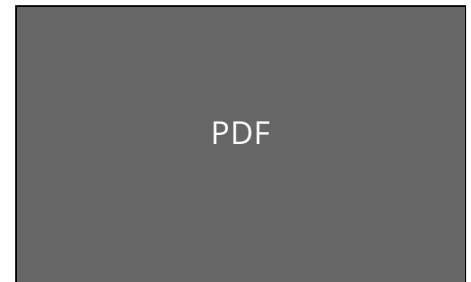
1-Planning-Pass... 3.6 MiB



Passport Cafe  
Renovation Architectural Plan



2-Planning Pass... 3.3 MiB

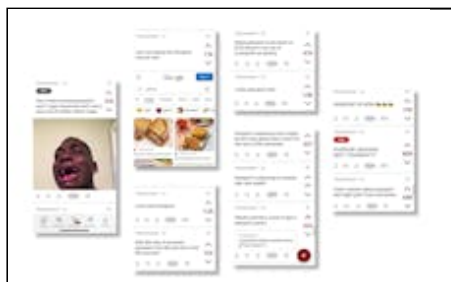


PDF

3-Marketing-Pas... 1.0 MiB



3-Marketing-Pro... 1.4 MiB



Passport Cafe  
Pre-opening Social Media posts on Pizz by UH Students



3-Marketing-Soci... 1.5 MiB



Newly Renovated Passport Cafe



4-Passport Cafe... 3.7 MiB



Mobile Ordering Pickup and POS merchandise



4-Passport Mobi... 3.4 MiB



Passport Cafe  
Compostable serveware and waste sorting area



4-Passport-Com... 2.9 MiB



Passport Cafe  
Front of House food prep is located close to mobile pick-up



4-Passport-Prep... 1.6 MiB



Passport Cafe  
Soft opening. All we had to do was open the door.



3-Passport-Soft... 4.6 MiB



Passport Cafe  
The highly illustrated wallpaper is a stunning backdrop in the cafe.



Passport-Wallpa... 545 KiB



Passport Cafe  
Students enjoy studying in the cafe. Passport was popular even before the grand opening.



4-Marketing-Gra... 1.5 MiB



Passport Cafe Grand Opening featured passport samples, stickers, a drawing for a Samsung tablet, free luggage tags with every order, and mobile decorations.



Passport Grand... 1.3 MiB



Menu1-Breakfas... 319 KiB



Menu 2-Breakfas... 324 KiB



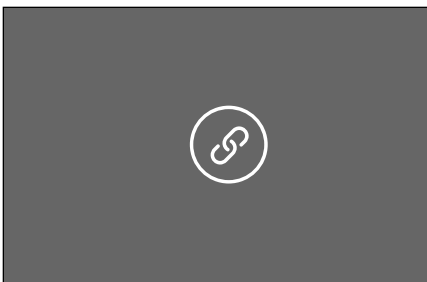
Menu 1-Lunch.jpg 277 KiB



Menu 2-Lunch.jpg 253 KiB



2024-IDEAs-Win... 178 KiB



Attachment name  
School newspaper cover...

<https://www.thecollegian...>

