



LRxrZboD

Entry details

Entry Name:	Perry Place at Hitt Hall
Institution Name:	Virginia Tech Dining Services
Entry Completed By (<i>name and position</i>):	Joy Blackburn, Creative Media Manager

Virginia Tech is constantly expanding. In 2012, Turner Place opened, the first dining center to be on the academic rather than residential side of campus. As the university planned to expand even more with the addition of new classroom buildings, a centralized multi-modal transit hub, and a goal of increasing enrollment by 5,000 students, a brand-new dining center was just what we needed — Perry Place. Planning began in 2017 for Hitt Hall, a multi-use facility for academics, classroom space, and dining.

Essay:

With planned enrollment growth and anticipated strain on existing dining facilities, the project goal was to expand dining capacity and enhance the student experience for both on- and off-campus populations.

Opened in Fall 2024, Hitt Hall is a 100,000 square foot, \$85 million multi-use facility. Dining Services led the planning and delivery of Perry Place, a 600-seat, nine-venue, 38,000 square foot component of Hitt Hall, representing a \$47 million investment informed by internal dining leadership expertise.

Direct student engagement through surveys, focus groups, and ongoing feedback shaped Perry Place. Demand for all-day breakfast led to the creation of Solarex, while requests for globally inspired cuisine informed Fresh and Feta, Velóce, and Rambutan. Culinary leadership conducted an extensive barbecue research tour to ensure regional authenticity and quality for Smoke. Creating a distinct, global dining experience was the priority, leading to

collaborations with Equal Exchange for sustainable coffee, Chef Mai Pham to create Rambutan, and Boar's Head for Trax. We researched authentic, imported ingredients for our other culturally focused shops.

Dining Services leveraged cross-team collaboration among culinary, operations, and leadership teams to prepare for opening. Coordinated pre-opening training, a soft opening series, and walkthroughs ensured consistency and operational readiness on day one.

Introduction:

Our marketing team built up anticipation for Perry Place across campus before launch. We wanted students to be aware and informed, but we also wanted to get them excited about a new dining space where they could eat, hang out, and study. Perry Place menu takeovers at existing venues and tastings let students, faculty, and staff experience Perry Place foods before the new facility opens. The more previews we shared about Perry Place, the more excitement rose. Hype for the new dining facility began at the heart of our dining program — students.

Essay:

Perry Place was advertised throughout campus physically with signs, flyers, and banners. We used "Perry Place at Hitt Hall" to introduce the new dining space and its nine venues as a central part of the building in which they would be housed. Social media posts, including videos and photos, created a sense of familiarity leading up to our launch date. We ensured consistency across all marketing materials, spotlighting each shop's concept with custom graphic elements unique to that shop while contributing to the cohesive style of Perry Place.

The summer before opening, Perry Place did soft openings at each existing dining venue so our campus community could experience the food, and so dining staff could get real-time service training. Feedback from participants was used to refine final menus and services.

The anticipatory marketing led to a grand opening launch day in August 2024. Our projected first-year sales goal was \$10.4 million, and we exceeded that by reaching \$10.5 million, with a \$10.35 average check and daily transactions hitting 7,500 in the first year. Other goals were met, like 600 seats, which was exceeded by 26, and our customer count per hour goal of 1,100, which was exceeded by 100.

Introduction:

Everything was a collaborative effort between the project team and Virginia Tech students. Menu development began with our chefs and the student advisory committee first laying out what they wanted to see and achieve. This also helped identify vendors to bring into the conversation and how meal and ingredient goals would be achieved.

Essay:

Developing Perry Place was grounded in broad campus collaborations to ensure the project reflected institutional priorities and met the dining needs of the campus community. Engagement extended well beyond Dining Services, bringing together student, academic, operational, and planning partners throughout concept development, design, and implementation.

Key campus collaborators included Dining's student advisory committee; provost colleagues; Hitt Hall's other primary occupant, Myers-Lawson School of Construction; Facilities and Capital Planning; and University Marketing, who partnered closely to align the dining and academic experience in Hitt Hall and Perry Place. Facilities and Capital Planning supported infrastructure needs, design feasibility, and long-term maintenance considerations. University leadership and planning offices ensured the project aligned with campus master planning goals and strategic investment priorities.

Internal Dining Services teams — including culinary, nutrition, sustainability, and operations — engaged collaboratively to integrate dietary inclusivity, workflow efficiency, and sustainability practices into the final design. This interdisciplinary approach supported ongoing feedback, refinement, and shared decision making, ensuring Perry Place functioned not only as a dining venue but as a thoughtfully integrated campus asset.

Through sustained collaboration and coordinated input across departments, Perry Place emerged as a project shaped by collective campus expertise to advance the student experience and operational excellence.

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