

Higher Education, Brighter Colors

Photography courtesy of VOA Associates Incorporated





Three Chicago universities approached VOA Associates with a unique concept: a residence hall for students from three different schools. With no prior example to follow, VOA pulled together a success, thanks to its creative planning and colorful story.

Columbia College Chicago, DePaul University and Roosevelt University formed a unique partnership to create a student residence facility in downtown Chicago. Students from all three universities would be living in the same building, making this an unprecedented endeavor.



"We wanted to create a place that was very welcoming and comfortable for the students, something with a feeling of security," says Patricia Rotondo, senior vice president of the architecture and design firm VOA. Many of these goals were accomplished through energetic, bold color choices from Benjamin Moore & Co. and high-end yet durable finishes.





On the second floor of the building, a corridor doubles as a gallery for student artwork. Benjamin Moore's American Cheese 2019-40 on the walls and colorful acrylic light covers on the ceilings create energy in the space.

A Lesson in Color

In the upper residential floors of the 18-story building, VOA chose three color pairings to repeat in the hallways of each floor. The three palettes selected from more than a dozen shades used throughout the building represented the three institutions but were not the literal school colors. "This building was not meant to separate people by school," explains Rotondo. Benjamin Moore's Regal® paint accomplished the job: "I have always had such a good experience with Benjamin Moore® products," says Rotondo. "It covers so well and gives you a really good sense of vibrant, alive colors."

Aside from the colorful walls and ceilings, VOA incorporated light box fixtures with acrylic covers in brilliant hues to add more energy to the space. "The institutions were very open-minded and willing to try new things," says Rotondo. "They were able to set an example for other universities to be vibrant and colorful, and to get away from typical white walls."

Project Overview — The University Center provides housing for approximately 1,700 students from three major Chicago universities. The first floor is commercial real estate space, followed by a second floor with a conference center, classrooms, dining hall and game room. The third floor includes a great room and outdoor terrace. The remaining 15 floors include a variety of residential floor plans ranging from suites and studios to multi-bedroom apartments. The students responded so well that the space was occupied almost immediately after opening.



One of Rotondo's favorite results of the colorful palette is the inviting view from outside. "When you look at the building from the outside, especially at night, you can see all the colors through the windows, from the walls and columns and lights. It's very inviting and really makes you want to be inside."



In the common dining hall, VOA Associates divided the large space with colorful architectural elements. L-shaped ceiling beams and columns painted in Benjamin Moore's Lighthouse 2018-60 help break up the space and add warmth. The pattern is also repeated on the floor.





Benjamin Moore® Colors in the University Center

- Cotton Balls 2145-70
- Lighthouse 2018-60
- Morning Sunshine 2018-50
- American Cheese 2019-40
- Spring Purple 2070-40
- Cumulus Cotton 2063-70
- Sapphireberry 2063-60
- Blue Marguerite 2063-50
- Light Daffodil 2027-60
- Castleton Mist HC-1
- Peacock Blue 2049-40
- Neon Red 2087-10
- Mandarin Orange 2018-20
- Mannequin Cream 2152-60
- Suntan Yellow 2155-50

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