



Interfaith Prayer, Mindfulness, and Meditation Space

James Branch Cabell Library

Goal: \$300,000



Proposed Interfaith Prayer, Mindfulness, and Meditation Space

Virginia Commonwealth University celebrates its distinction as the most diverse university in Virginia. Students and faculty come to VCU from all over the world, fit into all age groups, reflect all income groups, and practice many faith traditions. VCU Libraries aspires to provide an appropriate and respectful space for all of its diverse community members to engage in academic pursuit with all the resources that a library provides for intellectual exploration and physical comfort. VCU Libraries facilities have been widely recognized for their success in providing these key elements that promote academic advancement.

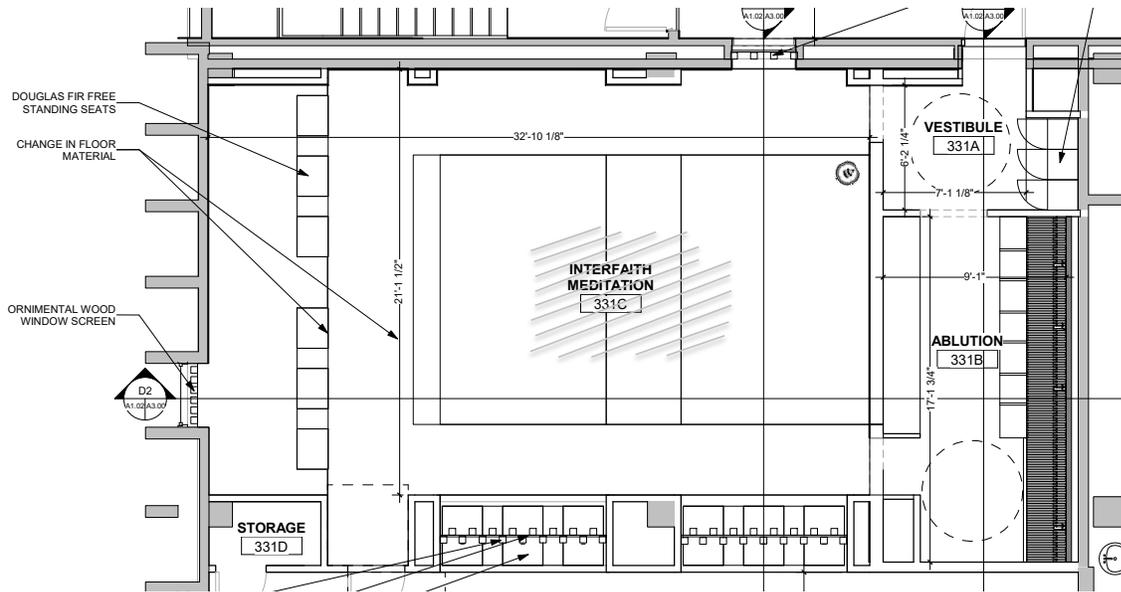
Since its expansion and renewal 2016, James Branch Cabell Library in particular has become an iconic symbol for the dynamism and success of VCU's academic community. It also has become a model among academic libraries for how it integrates student intellectual life with the physical comforts essential to academic study, including one of the busiest coffee shops and cafes in Virginia that provides for students' physical sustenance as they study long, often overnight, hours. But for all of its success, VCU Libraries notably lack support for a third element integral to the success of almost every member of the VCU community: individual spiritual life, in all of its vastly diverse forms. Students throng Cabell Library night and day, around the clock, and they find intellectual and physical

sustenance easily and readily available. But the building has no space for the spiritual sustenance of students and other members of the VCU community, a space to practice their faith in silent worship, to engage in meditation, to seek a wellness or mindfulness respite, or to simply retreat briefly into peaceful and solitary contemplation.

Many universities and university libraries, including many public universities, have created non-denominational spaces devoted to silent prayer, meditation, and mindfulness practice for students and faculty. Such spaces are becoming increasingly common in airports, hotels, and other public gathering places. VCU, in contrast, provides only one space for this purpose on the Monroe Park Campus (which houses almost all undergraduate programs and residences), which among other shortcomings operates with limited hours. Spaces on VCU's MCV Campus are designed as interdenominational chapels chiefly for Christian users, and do not accommodate other faith traditions, mindfulness practice, meditation, or silent contemplation.

VCU Libraries proposes to create an exemplary space for silent prayer, meditation, and mindfulness practice in Cabell Library, at the center of VCU's undergraduate student life and open around-the-clock during the academic year. We seek to build a space that will be a model for such spaces in academic libraries nationally, accommodating the immense diversity of VCU's academic community and reflecting the pride we experience in welcoming and supporting every human being as part of VCU's rich and vibrant academic life.

While this project is still in the planning stages, an underutilized area on the third floor of Cabell has been identified as the proposed site for the facility. The location is easily accessible, provides water for ablutions and rituals, offers a window for comfortable natural light, and meets the needs of many in the community. It also includes a partition that allows simultaneous use by different groups and faith traditions for different purposes. Although the space allows privacy for religious and spiritual practice, it features screened openings into the third floor study area in recognition of the security and safety needs of all students. Faith communities at VCU have been consulted in the design. A policy governing facility use will be created in consultation with stakeholders throughout the VCU community.



Preliminary design for Interfaith Prayer, Mindfulness, and Meditation Space

The space is projected to cost \$300,000 and only private funds will be used in the construction. The naming of the space in recognition of a major gift begins at \$150,000.

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