



The Architecture of Return: *creating memories that drive alumni to come back and give back*

Does distinctive Campus architecture matter to students who do not study architecture? Is there a function or purpose to university buildings besides educating students and supporting faculty (or pleasing donors)?

Certainly the primary function of a university is educating students and supporting faculty research. However, in today's world, the importance of alumni relations is increasing. This is because the long term health of the institution is enhanced when alumni continue to support the institution, such as by

- hiring and mentoring younger alumni
- recommending the institution to prospective students
- raising the profile of the institution by crediting some of their success to it
- donating funds to the institution

This happens when alumni remember their university fondly and with pride. This happens when alumni think of the university as their alma mater and fellow alumni as part of their family. Consequently, a campus architecture that creates a sense of family, nurtures memories of that place and those familial bonds, can contribute to the growth and sustenance of the university.

Yale has a wealth of beautiful buildings, a veritable sculpture garden of the works of some of the world's greatest architects. It also has nurturing residential facilities (called residential colleges), either originally designed or subsequently renovated to promote collegiality and interaction among students. Each has a Common Room, Dining Hall, and courtyard, with rooms for exercise, avocations, studying and just hanging out. Each has its own intramural athletic teams, and informal student run eateries. Each has a mix of living units, primarily focused on student suites built on an entryway system, rather than on corridors.

"The residential college system is one of the glories of Yale, and it is a major reason why students choose to come to Yale and a major reason why Yale College students report greater satisfaction with their education than students at most peer institutions."

<http://newresidentialcolleges.yale.edu/vision/charting-course-academics-and-student-life#parameters>

What draws alumni back to Campus for reunions, are not just memories of the place – but of memories of people. These significant social interactions are generated by the residential college design. The Yale Campus impacts its students directly if sometimes subconsciously. They remember those places. They want to come back to them.

To get a sense of this, read some of the [Architectural Remembrances](#) – recollections of Yale alumni about spaces and places at Yale. Some concern specific pieces of architecture, some concern the spaces between them, some the friendship engendered thereby.