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Extreme Makeover: Valentine Dining Hall Edition

By Daniel Diner '14, A&L Section Editor

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There are precious few College students who have not complained about the long lines at Valentine Dining Hall during lunch hours, and many are those who have opted for the Lighter Side Chicken to avoid waiting through another 6:00 p.m. traffic jam. The good news for such students, however, is that Val has been listening — and with student concerns and suggestions in mind, the dining hall underwent a series of renovations designed to address those notorious jams.

One important change is the addition of a third exit on the south side of the salad bar. Previously, diners hoping to reach the snack or beverage sections, and even those just trying to leave the servery, had to pass through the narrow space between the salad bars and walls. No easy feat, considering the lines for the salad bars often took up half of the already narrow width. Now students will be able to exit from mid-bar, sparing them from much of that uncomfortable squeeze.

Another major change to the structure of the serving area is the relocation of beverages to outside the servery, to the west exit and wrapping around into the Russ Wing, with the soft serve machines and an allergy-free station occupying part of the space freed by the drink machines. This move means that diners will be making at least one stop fewer inside the servery. And as less stopping means less traffic, Executive Chef Jeremy Rouch pointed out that it will now be “much more convenient to come in and get a second beverage.”

Many students have expressed favorable opinions of Val's makeover. Though Will Mosley '12 feels that Val ought to decide “what they're going to do with all the empty space” left by the servery's old stretch of beverage machines, he agrees that the new floor plan “makes weaving through athletic teams coming in from practice so much easier.”

One of the more noticeable changes Val has made is the installation of new, colorful floors. Charlie Thompson, Director of Dining Services, explained that since the old floor had many “dark corners and spots,” they wanted to spruce it up by giving it new lighting and color. Now the Val flooring shines with vivid blocks of color.

Though opinions about the new color scheme vary from “cheery” by Thompson to “tragic” by Mosley, according to Thompson, at least, the change has been very apparent in students and staff alike. Workers began displaying noticeable signs of gusto, going so far as to say that after the floor renovations it “felt like being in a different building.”

Other major changes include the replacement of all other finishes (flooring, carpeting), the installment of a new ceiling, the replacement of the old dish conveyor belt with a vertical accumulator (boasting three layers of tray slots), the switch to environmentally friendly detergents and cleaners, as well as the purchase of a new, more eco-friendly dishwashing machine. With these renovations, Val is striving towards making itself as convenient, sustainable and user-friendly as possible.

The project was overseen by Peter Root, an assistant director of Physical Plant, with additional funding provided by the College.



Photo by Daniel Diner '14

Valentine Dining Hall has a new look and new hopes for traffic-free dining.