

PROFILE

NAME: Mark and Paula Hurd Welcome Center

LOCATION: Baylor University, Waco, Texas

NUMBER OF STUDENTS: 20,000

WEBSITE: hurdcenter.web.baylor.edu/

CHALLENGE

Baylor University was seeking to modernize its student recruitment experience and take advantage of the beautiful views on campus to create a wow factor that would be remembered with the design of its new welcome center.

SOLUTION

The Baylor University's Mark and Paula Hurd Welcome Center uses two Epson Pro Series projectors to create an enormous floor-to-ceiling image on a screen. When the presentation is over, the screen rises to expose a wall of windows and a stunning view of the campus, giving potential students an experience they won't forget.



Epson Display Helps Impress Baylor University's Prospective Students at the Mark and Paula Hurd Welcome Center

Baylor University in Waco, Texas, is a private Christian university and a nationally ranked research institution serving more than 20,000 students across 50 states, the District of Columbia and 90 countries. Chartered in 1845, Baylor is the oldest continually operating university in Texas. The university has a vibrant campus community and offers a broad range of degrees among its 12 nationally recognized academic divisions. Baylor's campus is considered one of the most beautiful in the country.

For years, the university's recruitment office had wanted to take full advantage of the picturesque campus views and everything else Baylor has to offer during student recruitment events. In September 2023 it opened the Mark and Paula Hurd Welcome Center at Baylor University which completely changed the game for recruitment, thanks to the innovative use of AV technology that creates a "wow factor," and leaves prospective students and their parents impressed, and wanting more.

"We've reset the standard," said Ross VanDyke, associate vice president of enrollment management, marketing and recruitment. "Other institutions are now asking us what we are doing."

The Mark and Paula Hurd Welcome Center at Baylor University

Located at the corner of I-35 and University Parks Drive in Waco, Texas, the Mark and Paula Hurd Welcome Center is a new \$60 million state-of-the-art building that serves as a front door to Baylor University, welcoming future students and parents into the vibrant experience that is the campus community. It features the 250-seat

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- JASON COOK, CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER,
BAYLOR UNIVERSITY

Fudge Family Auditorium on the second floor, which is where presentations are done for prospective students and their families.

In the auditorium, two Epson large venue projectors are used to create a stunning visual experience. The recruitment presentation begins once students and their families are seated in the auditorium, accompanied by projected images and video in amazing clarity and color on an enormous floor-to-ceiling screen.

At the end of the presentation the screen lifts, suddenly revealing a wall of windows and a stunning panoramic view of Baylor's scenic campus. "Everyone is just wowed," said VanDyke. "Students are blown away."

How It's Done

The wow-factor comes from the unique installation of the Epson projectors. When designing the auditorium, the university wanted to create a movie-theater-like sensory experience to grab students' attention – and needed to do it on a surface that wasn't a traditional 16:9 aspect ratio.

The installation uses two Epson Pro Series large venue projectors with Epson's ultra-short throw lenses. The zero offset lenses create a floor-to-ceiling image from very close to the screen and the 30,000-lumen-projectors¹ are recessed into the ceiling so that the attention is solely on the projected image, not the equipment. The projectors are installed side-by-side and their displays are edge-blended to covers the super-wide screen – a 32:9 aspect ratio – creating a single large, enveloping image. "When you walk in you don't know there are windows behind the screen. The admissions counselor does the presentation, then there's the big reveal," said VanDyke. "I've never seen anything quite like it. Students are wowed. We've even had some parents who are in the AV field who can't believe the short throw from the projector to the screen."

Designing Specifically For The Experience

Increasingly universities are creating dedicated spaces to support recruitment – like Baylor's welcome center that is designed to wow families through technology. In addition to the setup in the auditorium, the building also features four 96-foot illuminated columns in the lobby that guests can walk inside of to immerse themselves in campus scenes.

The Hurd Welcome Center provided a unique opportunity for the university to create a dedicated space for recruitment. "With today's young adults, it really is all about experiences. How do we create memorable experiences and differentiate ourselves from others?" said Jason Cook, vice president for marketing and communications and chief marketing officer.

The Hurd Welcome Center also changed how the university looks at designing buildings. Instead of constructing a building and then



fitting the tech inside, the tech drove the design. "For us, this building changed how we looked at designing our other buildings," said Cook. "Traditionally, you build a square box and bring the tech in. Here the tech drove the design."

"Very seldom do you get the chance to take something you've been very successful doing and put all that aside and start from scratch all over again. This building allowed us to re-look at what we're doing and then ask the question 'what if,' VanDyke said.

"We positioned the building there so we would have that image. The integration of that vista with the tech is incredible. It really was an opportunity to look at a blank page."

The Hurd Welcome Center also houses the undergraduate admissions office, the McLane Family Alumni Center, a 1,000-seat ballroom, a Peets coffee shop, a large spirit shop, and 11 meeting rooms that are open to students and faculty. With the Hurd Welcome Center, Baylor is taking the recruitment experience to the next level.

"We give them all the perks for what it means to be a Baylor Bear and if, at the end of the day, they say it's not for me, I want them to say 'but man, it's awesome,'" said VanDyke. "What we've done in the building really lends itself to that."

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- ROSS VANDYKE, ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT OF ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT, MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT

¹Color brightness (color light output) and white brightness (white light output) will vary depending on usage conditions. Color light output measured in accordance with IDMS 15.4; white light output measured in accordance with ISO 21118.

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