

## Apple It Up

### How Pepperdine University's "iDorms" Reinvent the College Experience



Photo credit: Chris Spielmann

You wouldn't expect a tiny 120-square foot dorm room with a shared bath and kitchen to win the hearts of college students or have senior administrators and faculty clamoring to stay in one.

But one look at Pepperdine University's Washington D.C. Campus Center located at 2011 Pennsylvania Avenue explains why the community has fallen in love with the building's micro-mini wonders of housing comfort, convenience, and style.

It's as if Apple senior designers had painstakingly styled the rooms. iDorms, anyone? Welcome to the new normal of the college experience.

"Does a 19 year old undergraduate student appreciate quality? Absolutely," declares Dennis Torres, Pepperdine University Senior Real Estate Officer and co-lead on developing the Washington D.C. Center with Heidi Jaeger, Pepperdine University Project Director for the office of the Senior Vice President and Chief Investment Officer.

The D.C. Center supports the internship programs of the University's Seaver College

undergraduate school as well as School of Law grad students. The school purchased the building, just four blocks from the White House, in April 2008, opening Phase 1 of the continuing renovation in early 2009. Three floors are now dedicated to housing, with two more floors in advanced planning stages. The Center will eventually house approximately 50 students.

"Dennis and I have the design and decorating philosophy of 'Apple it up,'" explains Jaeger. "That's because our students—our customers—expect it. It resonates with them. They like that clean, scaled-down, uncluttered aesthetic."

Central to that aesthetic is transforming furniture from Resource Furniture. Resource Furniture's line of high-quality wall beds and other multi-functional furniture solutions reimagines what is possible in a very small space. So much so, Pepperdine students affectionately call the D.C. Center "the Ritz Carlton." Steady occupancy is well north of 90 percent, with 100 percent occupancy "expected year-round in a couple years."

"The furniture from Resource Furniture makes total financial sense for us. We're now able to host more students on each floor without them feeling cramped. To the contrary. The Manhattan/Tokyo loft experience really resonates with our students. By using the highest-quality furnishings, the students value these smaller spaces more highly than cheaply furnished larger spaces," Jaeger says. "We have to market ourselves in a way the young people will value. It's important for students to like their dorm room, the aesthetic, the location. That's part of the college experience, too."

Torres agrees. "It actually costs only a little extra for quality. The cost of the furnishings is almost trivial relative to the cost of the space, so the resulting ROI for the university is much greater. Cheap is more expensive in the long term. Resource Furniture is already contracted to equip the two new floors. They're amazing. We couldn't be happier with their product, support and service!"

The furniture has also proven to be a god-send to the Center's maintenance staff, performing flawlessly three years and counting. "We've had zero problems. The furniture looks as good today as the day it was installed," affirms Torres.

So where do Center developers Jaeger and Torres stay in D.C.? "We'd love to stay at the Center," Jaeger laughs. "But it's always booked!" ●

#### For More Information

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