THE SCHWARZMAN CENTER

In May 2015, President Salovey announced that Yale College alumnus Stephen A. Schwarzman is giving $150 million to create a state-of-the-art campus center by renovating the historic University Commons and Memorial Hall. For the first time, Yale will have a building dedicated to student life. We have the opportunity to restore a 114-year-old facility to create an unsurpassed center serving all students and a place of exceptional programming. The complex is extensive; the four floors of the two buildings total over 87,000 square feet.

The historic Commons will be retained for major university events like reunions and as a student luncheon venue, but it will be renovated to host many other kinds of events throughout the year. Innovative technology can allow virtual engagement with the outside world in a dynamic way. There will be wide consultation with the campus community about the actual design of the spaces, but it is expected that the Center will include student meeting spaces and creative dining options, flexible spaces for special events, and state-of-the-art technology.

The Schwarzman Center is expected to open in 2020.

Excerpt from Yale College Reunions 2015
The Schwarzman Center includes:
1. The main floor and basement of Commons
2. The basement and upper two floors of Memorial Hall. The Memorial on the main floor honoring Yale graduates who died serving the country will be preserved and enhanced.

*The center does not include Woolsey Hall, although the intention is to coordinate programming.*
The Schwarzman Center is at the heart of the University geographically.
FLOOR PLANS

Current floor plans of Commons and Memorial Hall sharing an approximate 87,000 square feet of space →

*Spaces available for the Schwarzman Center are shaded on the floor plans.*
The lower level of Commons has been a maze of dark rooms used primarily for food preparation that has, over the years, been transferred to other sites. The basement can be opened to create large spaces. Some of the space will still be needed for mechanical systems to service the Center.

Shading is approximate and depends on the needs of the mechanical systems.
The main spatial configuration of Commons will be retained for the Monday–Friday lunch service for students. Commons will also continue to be used for major University events like Reunions and Yale Medal Ceremonies, but it can be renovated to become available for many more events and activities.

Woolsey Hall

The colonnade outside of Commons might become an outdoor café.

Memorial Hall will be preserved and enhanced.

Kitchen space to be renovated and expanded.
Available spaces in the Center shaded in blue.

Open to the ground floor.

Presidents’ Room: will continue to be used for some University functions.
Available spaces in the Center shaded in blue.
There are some planning imperatives to take into account as we imagine the Schwarzman Center:

- All parts of the Center, and all floors, must be accessible.
- The proposed uses for the Center must not detract from the sense of community within the colleges or in each of the professional schools.
- Current lunch service (Monday–Friday) for students in Commons will be retained.
- The basic floor plate of Commons will be retained in order to hold major University events there.
- Presidents’ Room needs to be periodically available for University functions.
- Memorial Hall, honoring Yale graduates, will be preserved and enhanced.
In his conversations last winter with Mr. Schwarzman, President Salovey sketched out how his gift could be transformational in going beyond renovating Commons and Memorial Hall to create a true hub for student life. The President underscored that widespread consultation with the campus community, and especially students, was essential to figuring out the components of the Center. In the conversations with Mr. Schwarzman leading up to the gift, a number of possibilities were sketched out. They are shared here in order to stimulate the community’s thinking.
Imagine how Commons could be used for performing art and cultural activities, or for a myriad of events ranging from large dances to hack-a-thons.
Imagine how innovative technology could enable audiences on the main level of the Schwarzman Center to connect with politicians, scholars, entertainers, and thought leaders around the world for educational panels and discussions.
Imagine that the small rooms could be used by many student organizations over the course of a day and evening through an online sign-up system.

Top photo courtesy of YaleDancers
Imagine using the mid-size rooms in ways that could be multi-purposed: from improv to chamber concerts to yoga and salsa lessons to virtual career counseling workshops with prominent alumni. The third floor of the Center features a room beneath the oculus, a circular window at the top of the grand dome. Seen in this hypothetical rendering with students having a “virtual lunch” with two Supreme Court Justices, this room could be designed as a multi-use space to function as a performance space, lounge, yoga studio, small dining room, or improv space.
Imagine that the dark corridor on the second floor of Memorial Hall could become a small gallery for student art but also other exhibits featuring international experiences or field work.
Imagine that the basement of Commons ... currently a dark maze of dining preparation rooms ... is entirely reconfigured and light is brought into the basement. Some of the basement will be needed for the Center’s mechanical systems, but the rest can be repurposed for uses of interest to students where they can meet, socialize, eat and/or make things.
Imagine that the exterior of the Schwarzman Center could function as an outdoor café opening up onto Beinecke Plaza.
Imagine that in conjunction with Nobel Peace Prize recipient Aung San Suu Kyi’s talk in Woolsey, there had been a three-day Burma festival in the Center with:

- Burmese cuisine
- Screening of the film *The Lady* in Commons
- Lecture on the Road to Mandalay in the Dome Room
- Lecture on Buddhism in the President’s Room
- Photographs of Burma from the Peabody in the gallery

*Enlivening the entire Center*
Imagine that some visitors to a school or residential college were willing to have a second appearance in the Schwarzman Center that was open to all students from around the University.

These individuals visited Yale in recent years but were hosted in only one residential college or School.
Imagine that the Center builds on recent special “foodie” events in Commons to provide more opportunities for graduate and professional students to also take advantage of the culinary occasions.
Imagine a small, dedicated staff who can work with student groups and with faculty and staff across the University to coordinate the activities of the Center and to help leverage and amplify existing events. For example ...

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<tr>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Coordinate programming with the YCC, GSA, and GPSS, as well as other student groups, on a regular basis</th>
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<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Leverage events already planned for Woolsey, Sprague, or individual schools or colleges to create opportunities for greater interaction with guests</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Ensure the maintenance and security of the Center</td>
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<td>Work</td>
<td>Regularly survey students about their satisfaction with the Center and their ideas for new programming</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Produce memorable Center events</td>
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IMAGINE

A place buzzing with activity every day

• Where students can drop in and always know something interesting is going on.
• With rooms for student meetings to draw groups to Schwarzman Commons who will then hang out afterwards.
• Where students can have meetings, parties, conversations ... and fun ... and encounter people from beyond their college or school.
• Where, to a degree unprecedented at any U.S. university, Schwarzman is a place where undergraduate and professional students mix and make friends across school boundaries.
NOW IT IS YOUR TURN TO IMAGINE THE SCHWARZMAN CENTER

In late September, there will be a “listening tour” by members of the Schwarzman Center Advisory Committee, with sessions in every residential college and school, as well as other sites around campus. The schedule of opportunities to talk with members of the Committee is posted at schwarzman.yale.edu.

The members of the Committee invite all members of the community to contact them with ideas for the new Center at schwarzman.center@yale.edu.