

Success Story

WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY – THE COMMONS AT HELM LIBRARY

Bowling Green, KY / 85,000 sq. ft.

BRANDS INCLUDED

National



“The WKU Commons establishes a new model for campus libraries as centers of social, plus academic opportunities that better mirror the world they will work in post-graduation. No longer is a library simply a repository of books and quiet studying. We now look at campus environments with a need for common spaces and places for students, faculty, and staff to interact in multiple modes and ways—truly setting everyone up for success.”

- David Broz, Principal in Charge, Gensler

Western Kentucky University is a public university with over 16,000 students located in the heart of beautiful Bowling Green, Kentucky. Known as the “Home of the Hilltoppers”, WKU’s northern end of campus sits atop a steep hill overlooking miles of the surrounding Barren River Valley. On the edge of the same hill stands Helm Library, one of the oldest buildings on campus. Established in 1931, Helm Library has lived many lives in its nearly 100-year history, first serving as the college’s gymnasium, and then for decades as the university library. In 2022 it saw its newest transformation, becoming The WKU Commons at Helm Library, a one-stop destination for Hilltopper students and staff.

PRODUCTS SHOWN

Grin® Seating / ByDesign Cushions



Despite its loving nickname, WKU's hilltop remained quiet and seemingly empty outside of class hours prior to 2022, as the bottom of the hill housed most residence halls, common and recreational areas, and dining options. In 2018, WKU President Timothy C. Caboni and a steering committee made up of selected faculty, staff, and students set out to transform the north end of campus from an area that students visited out of requirement for class to

a sought-after destination for social interaction and flexible study environments. Through a funding partnership between WKU's food service provider, Aramark Restaurant Group, and WKU Libraries, the \$35 million project's construction began in the summer of 2019, but ground to a screeching halt with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020.



PRODUCTS SHOWN

Delgado® Lounge



PRODUCTS SHOWN

Fringe® Lounge

Despite work slowdowns and unprecedented material shortages, the project's delayed progress came at a surprising benefit for WKU, allowing additional time for thoughtful and intentional design of the new space. WKU Planning, Design, and Construction partnered with Gensler design firm and Louisville-based architects Luckett and Farley to lead the project's design efforts.



PRODUCTS SHOWN

Idara® Lounge



PRODUCTS SHOWN

Fringe® Lounge



PRODUCTS SHOWN

Hobsen® Lounge / Idara® Lounge



The design team chose to partner with local dealer Office Resources Inc. (ORI) for furniture procurement. WKU's longstanding partnership with ORI and the University's love for National lounge and table options used in previous campus projects, made Kimball International an easy choice for the new Commons' ancillary needs. National's Grin, Hobsen, WaveWorks, Idara, Eklund, Delgado, Rizora, Fringe, Marnia, Tellaro, and custom made ByDesign bench cushions were selected for the new space's lounge and open areas due to their trusted durability and quality, wide array of finish and material options, extensive statement of line, and research-backed design.

Becoming WKU's seventh LEED® Certified campus structure, The WKU Commons at Helm Library opened its doors to the campus community in April 2022, signifying a new era for Western Kentucky University's hilltop. Helm Library is no longer a quiet building used only to house literature, but instead a space buzzing with exciting activity. The Commons now provides a one-stop destination for students and faculty to attend class, scope out their preferred study style, grab a coffee or bite to eat, or meet up with friends. Much of Helm's meaningful history is still preserved in the new Commons, including the building's original skylights and the basketball jump circle of the original gym floor, almost as if the building's storied past welcomes this new chapter of its journey with open arms.

PRODUCTS SHOWN

Fringe® Lounge / Grin® Seating / Rizora® Stools

Success Story Product Listing

NATIONAL

Delgado®

Eklund®

Fringe®

Grin®

Hobsen®

Idara®

Rizora®

WaveWorks®

ByDesign Cushions