

Branding

UVA ADDS RISING ROLL

After getting the opportunity to place a foodservice location in an underserved area of campus, UVA Dining at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville wanted to make sure that it selected a venue that would work well.

“It is the busiest neighborhood on grounds with student visits each week,” said Brent Beringer, director of UVA Dining with Aramark, the campus foodservice provider. “So the neighborhood itself was very underserved. We had been hoping to put something in that area for years, and the space was just never available. Even the space that we have is relatively small to serve the market, so we knew we would need something that had some high speed of service.”

A convenience store was considered, but Beringer felt that would “be the easy way out. The space is actually convenience store size. It is about 2,500 square feet. That was the easy way out; it would have been a nice product, but when we talked to the faculty and staff, they said, ‘No, we want more. We want a health-and-wellness aspect. We want a fresh aspect, neither of which we see in a convenience store on a regular basis.’ They more or less made the decision that they wanted food. With the limited space for kitchen and everything else, the bakery-café concept really was a natural fit.”

Dining presented a number of brands to the decision makers, and Rising Rolls Gourmet Café was chosen. “This was the winner hands-down based on strictly looking at material,” he said. “They hadn’t tasted the food or anything else, but just based on the menuing, the health and wellness aspects of it and everything else we could show them, there was no question that is what they wanted.”

The new location opened in March as part of an \$80 million upgrade of Cabell Hall. “The building has an interior courtyard that they wanted to soften and make usable,” said Beringer. “It was relatively inaccessible and not very attractive before the remodel. The space that they allotted us was a natural fit. It gave space back to create the access into the building. It also created a nice flow out into this courtyard that has been redone. This concept has three points of access, which is something we love to see. One to the courtyard and exterior seating, one with direct access to the outside of the building and one point of access into the academic building itself.”



The brand was well-received by the students, faculty and staff, even though many were not familiar with it prior to the opening. “We did a grand opening celebration that really brought people in and got them used to the brand,” he said. “We were fortunate in that we were working in an underserved neighborhood, so we didn’t have to work as hard to introduce the brand. It was a natural education process. It was really more about sampling and in-house education and that sort of thing. The brand was something they came to afterwards, and they have come to love it. In fact, we have seen more social media from our guests at the university on this brand than we have seen on any other brand we have done. Everything from write-ups on Twitter and other social media to several pretty high-profile blog posts. We don’t necessarily see that, even with other national brands. This has such a fresh and health and wellness connotation for the customers that it is growing like wildfire. It is really hitting right on trend.”



Dining did consider opening its own brand in the space. “We felt we needed to change the portfolio a little bit,” said Beringer. “We don’t have a lot of national brands on grounds. When we look at the portfolio across all of the 31 restaurants that we operate, we felt that we were a little underserved in brands. It is not the only

place where we have added national brands this year. We have also added Five Guys and Subway to the portfolio to round things out a little bit. We still have quite a number of Aramark brands, and they do very well. With so many restaurants and so many students on meal plans, and always wanting to grow that, we wanted to make sure we were offering some variety and just something a little bit different.”