

## **Watching the People**

Yesterday, I spent an hour or so watching students use a couple of vending machines in Little Hall. One was selling drinks and the other snacks. On their own, it seems that these machines would not have any cause for confusion, but together, they lead to confusion and frustration in the users. I would watch people walk up to buy a drink, after first walking past the snack machine. The snack machine has a credit card swiper to allow users to pay without the need for cash. Users would walk past this machine first, but proceed to the drink machine. The immediate reaction is that they can pay for a drink with a card, but everyone who got that far wound up realizing that it only takes one dollar bills. This disconnect had people entering the code for a certain drink, pulling out their card, before realizing that the machines doesn't accept it. On average, almost everyone visiting the machine area were going for a drink, but the expectation to be able to use their card due to first seeing the swiper on the snack machine was not met. Most people wound up not even buying the drink. Realistically should the machines have both been card taking or strictly paper money taking, this disconnect would likely not exist and not lead to frustration in the user. It seems that people are far more likely to have a bad experience in an ecosystem if there is too much variance between devices. As an after thought I imagined buying an iPhone but you never knew what kind of port was going to be on the bottom. I believe it is the same thing here. The lack of consistence between units has led to a worse off design.