# COVE Space UX Research Project

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Course: UXD 3010 – UX Research  
Role: Researcher & Interviewer  
Tools: Field Observation, User Interviews, Affinity Mapping

## Overview

This project explored how students at Milwaukee School of Engineering (MSOE) interact with The COVE, a shared study and social space in Viets Tower. The goal was to understand what motivates students to use the space—and what prevents them from doing so. By combining observational research with qualitative interviews, our team sought to uncover patterns in usability, comfort, and productivity.

## Research Objectives

* Identify how students experience the COVE’s layout, atmosphere, and amenities.
* Examine how space design influences comfort, productivity, and social interaction.
* Uncover unmet needs and behavioral patterns that could inform future campus space design.

## Methods & Process

1. Field Observations  
Our team conducted 30-minute observation sessions in three COVE zones: the front lobby, hallway cubicles, and the back Maker Space. We recorded user behaviors, movement patterns, and environmental factors (e.g., sound, lighting, seating use).  
Key Observation: Students preferred cushioned seating or cubicles for focused work, while wooden tables in the Maker Space were associated with collaborative activity.  
Behavioral Pattern: Informal 'quiet zones' emerged where individuals respected personal boundaries and minimized noise.

2. Semi-Structured Interviews  
We conducted three in-depth interviews with MSOE students representing diverse majors and living situations. The interviews explored comfort, productivity, and the perceived role of the COVE. We used open-ended questions guided by curiosity, focusing on motivations, space use habits, and emotional perceptions.

3. Affinity Mapping & Thematic Analysis  
We synthesized responses into three categories—Usability Issues, Positive Feedback, and Unmet Needs—to identify design implications and user trends.

## Key Insights

* Students viewed the COVE either as a quiet study spot or a social hub, but rarely both.
* Usage was strongly tied to convenience—students who lived nearby or had classes in Viets were more likely to use it.
* While participants rated comfort highly (8–9/10), productivity scored lower (5–7/10) due to distractions and lack of privacy.
* Students wanted more whiteboards, greater privacy in study pods, and a reopened café.

## Impact & Reflection

This project refined my qualitative research and user interviewing skills, emphasizing the importance of approaching design with curiosity rather than assumptions. Through field observation and direct user engagement, I learned how environmental design directly impacts both individual focus and community engagement. If extended, this study could evolve into a mixed-methods project measuring how environmental adjustments—such as spatial zoning or acoustic redesign—affect student productivity and social interaction patterns.

## Appendix: Supporting Research Files

The following documents contain the full research materials from this project. These can be found in the attached portfolio files or linked on the portfolio site:

•  UX Research Interviewing Project Part I-2.pdf

•  UX Research Project 1 Field Notes.docx

• UX Research Project 1 Interviews for COVE Research.docx

• 04 Field Notes Form.pdf

• UX Research Everything Put Together.pdf