

# HOUSE

DESIGNERS

## Alumni architects oversee renovation of fraternity house

By Elizabeth A. Davis

It's important for architects to understand how buildings are used when they begin design work.

David Purser and Ty Lee, former inhabitants of the Sigma Phi Epsilon house at UT Knoxville, used that experience when they crafted the plans for the renovation of the fraternity house.

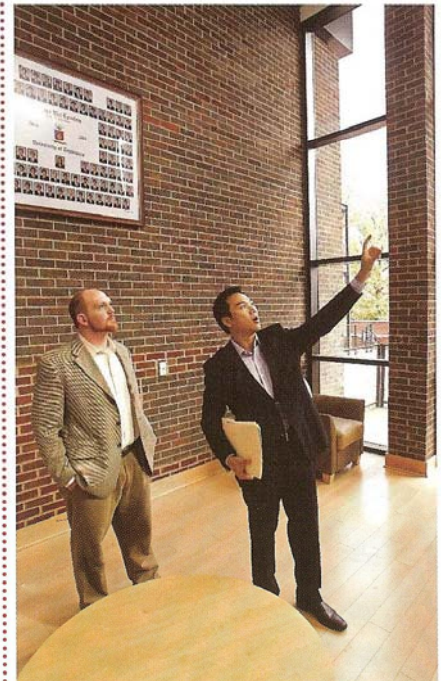
Purser ('03) and Lee ('04), who started their Dallas-based architectural firm, PurserLee, in 2009, oversaw the renovation of the 1960s-era facility that was completed in August 2011.

"The project was an exciting chance to

not only revisit our college years but also make improvements that enhance the experience for the current students," Lee says. "The current brothers continue to express to us how the spaces truly support and enhance their day-to-day life and social activities."

The biggest change was to the center of the building, which serves as the entrance and living room between the wings of individual rooms on each side. The roof of the center section was raised about five feet, allowing more natural light to pass through and better views of the surroundings. The courtyard behind the building was improved and modernized, and the room for chapter meetings was upgraded with wood paneling. Each improvement Purser and Lee made was with the understanding that it needed to withstand wear.

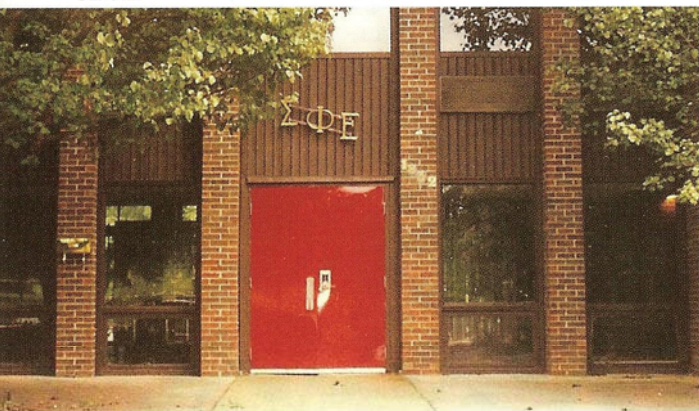
"Living in the house is a unique insight into how it's used," Purser says. "It's a fraternity house with 40 guys. It's not going to be spic-and-span all the time."



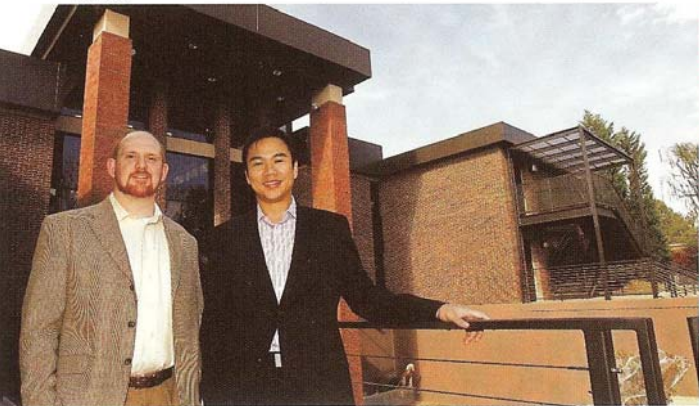
Lee points to the raised ceiling in the common area.

For more information about PurserLee, visit <http://www.purserleearch.com/>.

BEFORE



AFTER



The renovation includes small upgrades like these chairs for meetings.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY WADE PAYNE

UT Knoxville alumni Ty Lee, left, and David Purser, right, used the experience of living in the Sigma Phi Epsilon house in their renovation plans.

