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## A STUDENT UNION FOR TODAY'S STUDENTS

Tena Bennett

*Southern Illinois University Carbondale*

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A STUDENT UNION FOR TODAY'S STUDENTS

by

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A Research Paper  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Doctor of Education

School of Education  
in the Graduate School  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
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RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

A STUDENT UNION FOR TODAY'S STUDENTS

by

Tena Bennett

A Research Paper Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

in the field of Educational Administration and Higher Education

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## **HEADING 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

College students are ever evolving and changing each year as students come and go through matriculation and graduation. As students evolve, it is important for the college campus to be dynamic and respond quickly to this constant change (Guido, Matsumoto, & McAllaster, 2019). Fostering a sense of pride in students during their college experience can be developed through space that provides a feeling of community, a connection that is long lasting (Smyth, 2016). This capstone project was developed to design and provide construct, supporting documentation, and explanation of a student union for the students of today and the future. It will highlight the wants and needs of the current college student body, while including faculty and staff, in a facility designed to be the living room of campus.

I have worked in student affairs for 20 years. My career started in campus recreation, where I quickly acquired a love for facility management. After working at three different universities in campus recreation, I changed courses and moved to the student union. Facility management was nearly the same in the facilities, they merely host different events and services. I have worked in the student union in facility management and as the Director at Southern Illinois University Student Center for 13 years. My professional goal is to one day be a vice president of student affairs and this project will demonstrate my comprehension of facility needs and layouts for a campus, which is a vital component within student affairs.

My facility background coupled with my experiences, education, and future goals is what prompted this capstone project. It has always been a dream of mine to be part of the process on a college campus to design and build or renovate the student union. The student union often serves as the front door to campus as it hosts events from new student orientation to homecoming and it

should be a showcase facility for the campus. This project will allow me to showcase my understanding and thoughtfulness of what a campus facility for the future needs to entail.

Being able to couple what I have learned concerning how students interact with their campus environment and my own experiences provides the backbone to my capstone. This project allows me to put to practice, in model form, what I have come to know. Through a strong theoretical foundation, I can approach the design of this facility both practically and logically. My years of experience have provided me conceptual ideas that I will put into practice through this design.

### **Purpose of the Project**

The design of a student union and its physical spaces, which are created to produce social and intellectual interactions between students and others on the campus, is a contributing factor in creating positive connections. This positive engagement in turn contributes to the sense of belonging and success (Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 1991). For every student there are benefits to being engaged on campus (Astin, 1993; Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

In this capstone project, I take into consideration the needs of today's students and future students to design an efficient facility that meets those needs. To understand those needs, I reviewed the history and role of the student union on college campuses from their inception, looking at when how the concept and facilities began. As the student union concept developed I explored how its purpose over time has transformed and finally consider how the physical condition of the student union positively and/or negatively affect the campus environment and student satisfaction. Illustrating the history and the role of the student union on a college campus, allows me to demonstrate how these facilities came to be, how their purpose has changed over

the years, and how the physical condition of the student union influences the campus environment and student satisfaction.

For this project, I studied the campus ecology theory, the theoretical foundation, and accompanying research. Campus ecology theory is focused on awareness of person-environment interactions that bring into perspective campus learning environments and the ecology of student development. By clearly understanding the central assumptions of campus ecology theory, I could better identify how university administrators can use campus ecology theory to improve their services to diverse populations both on campus and within their surrounding communities.

These two bodies of knowledge comprise the bulk of my literature review for this project. From the literature, I developed my ideas and concepts for the building which framed my methodology and defined my approach to the project. This led to the conceptual framework of the university and design of the facility in SketchUp. With each floor and space, I will explain in greater detail the need and purpose of each space. In conclusion, I discuss the applicability of the project to my professional career.

## HEADING 2

### A SHORT HISTORY OF STUDENT UNIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

College presents a multitude of opportunities for students to participate and engage in organizations, activities, and events with other students, faculty, and staff. Student engagement takes place within the campus environment, which can facilitate or limit these opportunities (Kuh 2001; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt 2005; (Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 1991). Fostering an engaging environment establishes positive relationships between the student and their college, leading to a stronger sense of belonging. The campus facilities that nurture these interactions through their various environments become vital to the community built on campus. The critical relationship and the connection developed between the student and their institution while they are on campus and well after graduation can lead to a lifelong bond with the institution (Heckman & Guskey, 1998).

Historically, the student union has served as the primary facility on a college campus that focuses on nurturing community and a sense of belonging. Serving as the hub of student life, the student union has operated as a destination, providing various programs and services to meet the needs of the students and the campus community. As Maxwell (2016) pointed out, “the college union has progressed over time to meet the changing needs and expectations of the student body and campus, while seeking consistently to improve the quality and competitiveness of its services” (p. 4). As the student body continues to change and progress, the student union continues to evolve with them, continuing to meet their needs while creating spaces that nurture their growth and development.

The student union has a long and rich history that continues to develop with the ever-changing landscape in higher education. The history and the role of the student union on college

campuses are significant in defining the purpose and function of these facilities for the students, faculty, and staff they serve on the campus. Being more than a physical structure with four walls, the student union serves as the hub of life on campus, space where students, faculty, and staff can meet, eat, play, and learn. These facilities can go by many names, including student union, university union, college union, memorial union, student center, university center, or campus center. The name does not define the space as they all have the same common purpose and started from the same history.

### **Earliest Student Unions**

The origin of student unions dates back to the 19th century at Oxford and Cambridge, where debating societies were introduced as the opportunity to gather socially; when three Cambridge debate societies were united to acquire their own quarters, the word 'union' developed into what it is today, defining the space for the development of community on campus (Butts et al., 2012). At Oxford, students imagined, developed, and ran the student union, often in conflict with the plans of the university administration (Gallagher & Zamecnik, 2013). Originally, with no formal facility, the Oxford University Student Union set the example for unions as it allowed students the opportunities to represent their opinions through decision-making for the activities provided for them (Butts et al., 2012). Not knowing that a physical structure could play host to their needs, the students were unaware that there could be an influence of the environment to meet their aspirations.

As facilities began to be built in the late 1800s and early 1900s in America, they provided another option from the eating clubs and secret societies that formed one system of segregation on college campuses (Thelin, 2019). With the formation of a proper facility, administrators were employing their influence over how students interacted in hopes of quelling the exclusion that

was occurring. While the student union buildings provided a common gathering place for all students, seeking to eliminate the residential cliques, it was highly utilized by commuter students and others not seen as wealthy. To the administration's disappointment, the affluent students simply avoided the facilities (Thelin, 2019). The objective of bringing all students together by the administration instead drove a wedge deeper between the pockets of students. While not meeting the desired outcomes of administration, the student union did fulfill many students' needs, especially those who needed a common space to find a connection to their peers, faculty, and campus.

While Harvard was the first American university to form a student union similar to that of Oxford and Cambridge with a general society in 1880 (Butts, 1971), the first student union building in the United States was on the campus of the University of Pennsylvania within the walls of Houston Hall, which opened in 1896 (Butts et al., 2012). Developed to be a place where male students could socialize with their peers, the student union became the social hub. Within its walls, it contained recreational amenities, including a swimming pool, a gymnasium, and billiard tables. It also housed the dining facilities, as well as study and meeting rooms, an auditorium, spaces for religious services and student clubs, and a dark room for photography (Butts et al., 2012). The University of Pennsylvania described the facilities purpose like this:

The purpose of Houston Hall is to provide for all the students of the various departments a place where all may meet on common ground; and to furnish them with every available facility for passing their leisure hours in harmless recreation and amusement. (Butts, 1971, p. 10)

Houston Hall laid the groundwork for what a student union could and should be for students at that time and well into the future.

The student union developed a positive correlation between the students and the campus. The campus became more than a place to get one's education; it was a place to be social and grow one's interests outside of the classroom. As student unions continued to develop on college campuses and literary societies became more inclusive, the students started to engage differently with the facility. Literary societies developed into union and student activity boards leaning towards supporting the academic mission, which was inclined towards a more inclusive environment (Culver et al., 2013). Union boards brought to the forefront the need for intentional programming encouraging learning outside of the classroom, allowing students to utilize their education in a practical manner.

The development of the student union was important to the development and involvement of students on the campus. As Rouzer et al. (2014) contended in their review of the role of the college union critique in the *New Directions for Student Services* journal series:

The historical roots of college unions are grounded in student involvement and recreation. The development of debating societies and focus on leisure time recreation before WWII evolved to focus on how college unions played a role in creating community on campus for faculty, staff, and students to gather for both social and intellectual pursuits. (p. 3)

As learning escaped the confines of the classroom, the college union developed into the intentional space students utilized for socialization, debate, and recreation. The development of college unions provided students with the critical space to meet, engage, and learn from and about diverse people, philosophies, and cultures that surrounded them (Kuh et al., 1991).

Following closely behind the University of Pennsylvania and Houston Hall, student unions became the new standard on college campuses. Included in the first were Brown



University; the Ohio State University; Indiana University; Universities of Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin; and others. The student union became the epicenter of campus for socialization with peers to recreate, eat, and study (Butts et al., 2012).

### **The 1920s and 1930s**

Life after World War I on college campuses drastically changed as men and women sought to share spaces, and the student union fit that definition as the social center for all (Butts et al., 2012). The war changed the perspectives of what social centers should be: a welcoming place for those who had served to nurture and develop traditions and relationships. It provided a place for men to cultivate new friendships in fellowship through work, food, conversation, and play (Butts et al., 2012).

Not until the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century did campuses start building the physical structures to be the home of the student union. Many campuses started to build unions following World War I; however, only large campuses were believed to need the facility (Butts, 1951). The construction of these spaces finally provided students with a community center. The student union building provided a space for students to create a bond with their institution and place meaning on the college experience other than where they went to school (Culver et al., 2013). The union became the place of connection for students with other students and faculty. They hosted gatherings, events, and dances or went on a date in the student union. The importance of finding time for leisure with one's peers was what the student union was built upon; it was the purpose of the facility. Porter Butts, who served as the Director of the Wisconsin Union from 1926 to 1968, drove home the point of meeting the social needs on campus:

The union proposes to make them (leisure hours) as valuable to the student as possible. It proposes to make the university a more human and personal and friendly place; it hopes

to become a kind of living room for students and faculty, where friends are easily made and where each student's experience can be richer. (Butts et al., 2012, p. 39)

Providing physical spaces for students to cultivate comradery with their peers, developing lasting friendships, and finding a place that felt like home became the primary purpose of the college union.

Butts, as the Director of the Wisconsin union, stated in “The Wisconsin Union Director’s Annual Report, 1929-1930” (Butts et al., 2012) that the union had four primary objectives to uphold:

1. The union exists to make the larger university a more human place...the union is a living room that converts the university from a house of learning into a home of learning.
2. The union can provide, in addition to the physical facilities where personal relations among students and teachers may naturally find expression, a comprehensive and well-considered program for the social life of the university.
3. The union stands as the university’s recognition of the importance of the leisure hour.
4. The union is a genuine student cooperative enterprise, aiming to give students experience in managing their affairs and the opportunity of reducing their living costs. (p. 40)

Almost a century later, these doctrines are still valid today as the union bodes to be the living room of campus, providing student opportunities for leadership, personal expression, leisure, and real-life experiences.

As the student union ideology continued developing through the 1930s, effects were felt from the Depression, and the students and the colleges felt the financial impacts. The Great

Depression changed the way students interacted, as they could not afford the luxury of more costly events, and they turned to inexpensive gatherings for discussions and recreation (Jordan & Vakilian, 2013). The Depression led to developing a sense of purpose for the student union through programs, services, and what the facilities contained within the walls. The focus turned to how college unions could fill the large blocks of leisure time students had outside of the classroom that would teach “students how to play as well as work” (Butts et al., 2012, p. 52). Students turned their leisurely focus back towards the root of the union – debate and comradery.

*The College Union Idea* provides text from multiple annual reports, presentations, articles, and speeches emphasizing the importance of the college union in creating the college experience beyond the classroom and providing the opportunities for social and leisurely interaction for the students (Butts et al., 2012). The college unions’ purpose had changed to be more than a meeting place, its intentions turned to serving as the heart of the community. The book references the student union as a home for students while also being a laboratory of self-expression, which provides the students with various social-cultural experiences and leadership opportunities in hopes of providing a holistic college experience. The facility's offerings were combined with various opportunities for personal growth and development, helping the student become a well-rounded citizen of their campus and community.

Students were starting to be offered the opportunity to provide insight into the purpose, policies, and focus for the student union through the role of a governing body. The development of these governing bodies often called union boards, created a sense of belonging for students. The union boards allowed students to have input into what was happening on their campus. "These initial student organizations provided a way for students to come together with a common interest, an organization that allowed for critical thought and a student-driven learning

environment" (Culver et al., 2013, p. 45). Students were provided leadership opportunities which they modeled after their counterparts at Cambridge and Oxford. Administrators hoped that by providing students this latitude they would develop skills not learned in the classroom, providing a more holistic education (Culver et al., 2013).

### **The 1940s and 1950s**

As World War II raged on at the turn of the decade, the college union maintained its focus as the community center of campus, strengthening its concentration to serve as a shared space for socialization. As Porter Butts wrote in his 1944 Wisconsin Union Director's Annual Report (2012),

To talk about the union means talking about several kinds of things. The union probably couldn't be, even if it wanted to be, a specialized department with a single meaning...because the union, at bottom, is just another name for the people of the university at leisure. Whatever interests them, whatever is important to them outside their working time becomes interesting and important also at the center of their campus life we call the union. So we have the union, in effect, a microcosm of the university itself, changing and evolving, meaning different things to different groups, and with several roles to play...It may well be the union has its highest value as a community center. (p. 72)

The college union truly became the epicenter of the community for the college campus during a time of unrest. It would meet the students' needs at that time while continually evolving with the various users and their demands for the spaces.

By 1950 there were over 150 student unions in the United States with just as many in the start-up or building phases. Student unions were the leading trend for building on a college

campus (Butts, 1971). As people adjusted to life after World War II, the student union concept was more robustly developed, looking to define what to include in the facility and what its purpose was on the campus fell more to the students than before. The planning of the union's physical space was also the planning of the campus' community life. As part of this growth and planning, student voices had been given more power to influence how the student union was improved and managed. The development and establishment of union governance provided students the responsibilities and opportunities to plan their events.

The student union was developing into an educational enterprise, providing more than just a place to spend free time and stay out of trouble, but as an integral part of the university contributing to the students' education outside of the classroom. It served to round out the college experience and create a deeper appreciation for the world outside of the college setting. The campus union served as the "hearthstone of the university" (Butts et al., 2012, p. 102) more than a building, but a community. As it built community, it developed the students into more worldly citizens, appreciating more than just their own experiences.

By this time, union boards or governing committees were becoming increasingly commonplace. Most student committees had a professional staff member as an advisor, but the students were in control of the decision making. "When compared to other organizations on college campuses, union boards were one of the most powerful and were tasked with trying to represent a larger group of students" (Culver et al., 2013, p. 50). Through their participation, students gained valuable skills in how to simultaneously represent themselves as well as others. During this time, the union boards paved the way for future boards to be taken seriously by the administration in their ability to make decisions for their campus.

Several milestones were reached during this time. Congress recognized student unions

along with housing and health services, and the union was included in the federal college projects eligible for construction loans (Butts et al., 2012). On the national level, the Association of College Unions adopted the first role statement for the student union, as shown in Figure 1 (page 14). The statement focused on clearly defining the purpose of the student union and articulating the union as an integral part of the campus community. This statement clearly outlined that the student union is the center of community development for the campus – providing for the essential needs of the community, connecting both the academic requirements and social desires, and cultivating a loyalty between the student and the college.

### **The 1960s and 1970s**

Through these decades' social discourse, the student union and its professional staff focused on providing direction for constructive activism in response to the waves of student disruption and violence (Butts et al., 2012). While the concept was still confusing to the public, the student union was starting to be a necessity and not a luxury on campuses, built to meet the students' needs. It served a core role on the college campus. The student union was looked to as the unifying force on the campus. “Because of its centralized social-cultural-dining facilities and because all students are members equally, the union becomes the common meeting ground for all” (Butts et al., 2012, p. 121).

As much as the student union was a unifying force, it still struggled to be defined as an integral function of education. As the Association of College Unions stated in the role it defined for the union: it is there to provide common meeting space for students with faculty, student organizations, a home base for commuter students, a living space for the campus including dining, as well as a place to get questions answered or purchase supplies (Butts et al., 2012). While these services are a necessity, they only fulfill half the mission of the student union, it is

1. The union is the community center of the college for all the members of the college family – students, faculty, administration, alumni, and guests. It is not just a building; it is also an organization and a program. Together they represent a well-considered plan for the community life of the college.
2. As the ‘living room’ or the ‘hearthstone’ of the college, the union provides for the services, conveniences, and amenities the members of the college family need in their daily life on the campus and for getting to know and understand one another through informal association outside the classroom.
3. The union is part of the educational program of the college. As the center of college community life, it serves as a laboratory of citizenship, training students in social responsibility and for leadership in our democracy.  
 Through its various boards, committees, and staff, it provides a cultural, social, and recreational program, aiming to make free time activity a cooperative factor with study in education.  
 In all its processes it encourages self-directed activity, giving maximum opportunity for self-realization and growth in individual social competency and group effectiveness. Its goal is the development of persons as well as intellects.
4. The union serves as a unifying force in the life of the college, cultivating enduring regard and loyalty to the college.

**Figure 1**

*The Role of the College Union Statement*

*Note.* Adopted by the members of the Association of College Unions at its 33rd Conference, 1956. From *The College Union Idea* (2nd ed) by P. Butts, E. Beltramini, M. Bourassa, P. Connelly, R. Meyer, S. Mitchell, and T. Willis, 2012, p. 105.

also the goal of the union to educate students on social responsibility and prepare them to be global citizens.

In the late 1960s, as civil discourse arose around the Vietnam War, the student union found a key role as a place for constructive activism. Finding ways for students to constructively work towards answering the questions that continued to rise around them through global turmoil. The student union became the space to actively engage in looking at what mattered most, the mission was:

To be the one, or one of the ones, who will want to educate the leader himself, by mustering all the unparalleled resources of a community center like this – building, teaching staff, and budget – to give students themselves the opportunities to shape the conditions of their life together and thus learn the ways of leadership...to infuse students with the idea that they are responsible for the welfare of their country (Butts et al., 2012, p. 139).

The student union's success was in the hands of the students and their leadership to work towards active citizenship and engagement in the governance of their campuses.

As civil discourse was occurring on a global front, the student union engaged in its own discussion around the name of the union buildings. Should the facility be named a college union or community center? While it functioned as the community center of the campus, *center* was never recommended as a suitable substitute for *union* as it provides greater worth and meaning (Butts et al., 2012). Butts et al. (2012) defined the purpose of the word union as such:

*Union* states directly the goal of unity among diverse groups of people which the building fosters, much as *university*, of which a union is a part, signifies unity in diversity in academic endeavors. The word *university* derives from the Latin *universitas* meaning the whole; union from [the Latin] *union* meaning oneness, a whole made up of united parts.

In the educational world the two concepts support and complement each other. (p. 143)

Center could easily be misunderstood for one of many other centers for art, research, or recreation which are based on shared activity and not necessarily focused on the shared social experience. The term “center” did not define the purpose of the space as a place for unity. Even with this argument, several campuses still called the building a student center or university center.



After the war, several state legislatures were putting state appropriations towards the building of unions, realizing the added opportunities an actual facility provided to the students' social life (Butts, 1971). A second building boom occurred across college campuses as “the United States Office of Education recently reported that present plans of colleges across the country indicate an expansion of existing Union facilities by 155 percent - the highest percentage increase contemplated in any field of college construction” (Butts, 1951, p.75). Universities, of all sizes, were answering students' requests for space outside of the classrooms to convene with their peers.

The focus for college unions turned to the financial abilities of the union after the war. University administration regarded the student union as a financial enterprise, putting new emphasis on generating revenue. Financial limitations drove student union administrators to refocus their attention to profitable services, including travel agencies, conference facilities, and specialized dining outlets while developing specific marketing plans to attract new amenities (Butts et al., 2012). This emphasis has not changed in several decades as unions are still seen as auxiliary units to the campus and are expected to generate revenue and reduce or eliminate reliance on state funds (Rouzer et al., 2014). A fine line must be walked in the role of generating revenue while providing the services and programs that are expected to meet the needs of the student body while continuing to foster the community center of the campus.

The balancing of financial concerns and maintaining the facilities and programs built after World War I led to a significant number of older student unions conducting extensive renovations and additions during this era (Butts et al., 2012). These renovations were also driven by federal laws mandates calling to eliminate physical barriers that prohibited accessibility to those with physical disabilities. Amid these physical changes to the unions, student activities and

extracurricular events were not as important to the student body. The lack of engagement fueled the questions of where the student union belonged and what purpose it served.

### **The 1980s and 1990s**

As universities started leaning into the business model, the union was regarded as an auxiliary unit that muddled the purpose the union looked to fill on the campus (Butts et al., 2012). The 1980s were a time of significant change on campuses and in the student union. The college union was looked to as more than four walls, as it provided the opportunities for students to find a sense of place in a diverse college environment, enhancing the sense of community on campus just as it did when it was first developed nearly 100 years prior.

While continuing to focus on the student environment, it became more evident that having a clear purpose and mission was imperative for the student union. Finding a suitable balance between business operations and providing quality programs and services became a priority (Butts et al., 2012). Finding this balance also meant meeting the needs of an ever-growing multicultural population on campuses that "extends beyond race into gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, religion and every other part of the human existence" (Butts et al., 2012, p. 192). While not new, these challenges created both obstacles and opportunities for union personnel to ascertain the student union as the community center of the campus.

Moving into the 1990s, union personnel looked to further establish their role in the college experience by identifying cocurricular experiences – matching extracurricular experiences with academic pursuits. Engaging students in various meaningful events and activities that develop them in a personal and professional way was a key strategy to maintain the sense of community the student union offered. The student union served as “a unity of service

and space that are greater in sum than in parts...a collection of services, spaces, and events that transcend individual limitations to serve the greater mission of ‘developing people as well as intellects’” (Butts et al., 2012, p. 205).

In 1996, the Association of College Unions International (ACUI) revisited the Role of the College Union statement looking to modernize the language and make it more relevant to the times, reviewing the union's core mission. The statement grounds itself in the physical structure and throughout the space, programs, and services derived from the student union. The union started to take a role in the recruitment and retention of students as an amenity to campus life as more students lived off-campus. It was a necessity to provide space for students and groups to meet on campus with the necessary amenities (Butts et al., 2012).

### **The 2000s through today**

The turn of the century was ushered in with the tragedy of the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks that stunned the American society. The student union was right in the middle, providing space for students to gather and find comfort while trying to understand what was occurring and why it transpired. These events lead to increased planning for safety and security. From that need for safety came yet another boom of new student unions being constructed while older facilities were extensively renovated through the 2000s (Revisiting Construction, 2012). The student union had to continue developing as the community center of campus as student spaces competed with more off-campus options and a vastly changing technology while providing a safe environment.

Food services drastically changed, moving away from the traditional cafeteria look and food court to incorporating franchised concepts such as Subway, Starbucks, and McDonald's. Students' expectations were changing, and they demanded the conveniences on campus (Butts et

al., 2012). Along with these physical conveniences, the utilization of technology started to surface within the student union. Computers being portable and telephones becoming smartphones are just a couple of examples of technology changing the dynamic and culture of the campus community. Online communities, convenient communication via e-mail, text, Snapchat, and other technology have challenged union professionals to find new ways to continue to be the community builders on campus.

Higher education has expanded from merely educating the mind to nurturing the whole student – mind, body, and spirit (Butts et al., 2012). The student union is continuously evolving and transforming to meet the students' needs through meditation spaces, lactation spaces, sustainable practices and facilities, and computer gaming centers. Staying in tune with the students' needs today and in the future will push the student union to be in a state of constant change trying to meet those needs. The union simply must continue to evolve while providing the out of classroom experiences necessary to engage the whole student.

### **Purpose of the Student Union**

As documented throughout this paper, the true purpose of the student union has not changed significantly since its inception. The union always has and still serves as the place to gather to socialize, recreate, and learn on a college campus. As Butts (1971) advocated, the union is a "laboratory for the close study of all our complex social relationships" (p. 22). Unions have always strived to be welcoming environments that cultivate education and socialization outside of the classroom. The walls do not define the facility, just as the first student unions started with no physical structure, but rather through a gathering of students with a desire to be with fellow students who shared a common purpose.

Unlike other campus facilities, the primary objective was intentional as unions were

created and designed to build community (Butts et al., 2012). While the purpose of building community sounds simple, how it is met varies from campus to campus. No two student unions are alike. While most house programming offices, food service, bookstores, and meeting spaces, some facilities are home to student affairs offices, transit offices, ID offices, parking offices, marketing offices, and recreation facilities such as bowling alleys. The uniqueness of each student union reflects how their campus meets students' needs by providing what they desire. These wants and needs have changed significantly over the years as today's diverse student body is looking for gender-neutral restrooms, cell phone charging stations, mediation spaces, makerspace, and gaming centers.

Students want a place where they can meet and connect with their peers, hang out, and be part of a larger community. Oldenburg (2001) provided a framework on the significance of these gathering spaces and described them as a person's "third place." A person's first place is their home, and the second place is their place of work. For college students, their first place would be their residence, which could be a residence hall, apartment, or their parents' home. Their second place would be their classrooms, laboratories, and places of employment while attending college. The student union provides the third place on campus where social interactions occur, and community is developed and nurtured.

The intent of today's union is to meet the communal need and be the student's third place, where they can gather and socialize. As shown in Figure 2 (page 21), the most recent *Role of the College Union Statement* (Association of College Unions International, n.d.) declares how students are provided these opportunities today has changed from the initial concepts of the student union. In today's union, students are provided with a variety of employment and volunteer opportunities. As discussed earlier, these opportunities on union or programming

The college union advances a sense of community, unifying the institution by embracing the diversity of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and guests. We bolster the educational mission of the institution and the development of students as lifelong learners by delivering an array of cultural, educational, social, and recreational programs, services, and facilities.

By any form or name, we serve as the heart of the campus community and create a welcoming environment by:

- Operating as a student-centered organization that engages in shared decision making and holistic development through employment and involvement.
- Advocating for inclusivity and equity, fostering respect, and affirming the identities of all individuals.
- Educating students in leadership and social responsibility and offering firsthand experiences in global citizenship.
- Providing gathering spaces to encourage formal and informal community interactions that build meaningful relationships.

Traditionally considered the living room, the college union enhances the student experience and cultivates an enduring connection to the institution.

## **Figure 2**

### *Role of the College Union Statement*

*Note.* Adopted by the members of the Association of College Unions International, 2018. From <https://www.acui.org/rolestatement>.

boards provide students with leadership skills that add to their classroom experiences. They learn how to work with others, make shared decisions, and advocate for their peers while being part of a global community. While for some students, employment opportunities are a necessity for the affordability of college, they provide income while also providing leadership experiences.

One significant area of change for the student union over the years is its focus on inclusivity. As previously stated, unions initially were designed exclusively for only the white men on campus, excluding women and students of color. Over the years, the student union has become a place where diversity is welcomed and celebrated (Banks et al., 2014). Today, the

union is a space for all students to socialize and learn about other cultures, perspectives, and viewpoints. Underrepresented groups often “find community and build a social network” (Banks et al., 2014, p. 15) in the student union, as they can find peers with similar interests and needs in the communal spaces.

The student union often provides a collective location for essential services such as hearing assistance, accessible facilities and services, and gender-neutral restrooms to create an inclusive environment. By providing these services, the university expresses to students that they have anticipated their needs and are committed to providing for these needs (Banks et al., 2014). By remembering where it started, being intentional in the spaces provided, and embracing its community's diversity, the student union will continue to be the hearthstone of campus.

### **Physical Condition**

The inception of the college union in Europe during the early 1900s was not initially connected with a physical structure. The union was a social construct supported comradery and gatherings through debates and the notion of “teaching young men how to get on with their fellows” (Butts, 1971, p. 1). There is no clearly documented evidence of a specific and/or unique facility to host these interactions. The student union was simply based on shifting communal needs or wants of the students. As time progressed, providing a facility for students to gather became more of a necessity as their needs grew. For more than the next century, hundreds of facilities of all sizes sprouted up on college campuses. Initially, the unions were a place for leisure hours to be spent debating, reading in the library and was the site of the dining hall (Butts, 1971).

The influence of the student union's physical condition on the campus community is key to understanding the evolving role of the union. Studies have demonstrated the influence of how

a building encourages and discourages behavior (Strange & Banning, 2001). The influence has been portrayed as three distinctive stances: architectural determinism, environmental or architectural possibilism, and environmental or architectural probabilism (Bell, Fisher, Baum, & Green, 1990; as cited in Strange & Banning, 2001). Architectural determinism indicates a rather direct link between behaviors and the environment. It does not, however, consider the human aspect on the physical environment as people often move, change, and even remove items around to suit their personal needs (Strange & Banning, 2001). For example, a dining area or meeting space may have tables and chairs set in a specific manner, but students will rearrange the seats to meet their needs. Environmental or architectural possibilism envisions the environment as a source of opportunities that may be limited but not restricted by its boundaries (Strange & Banning, 2001). Several student unions provide multi-purpose spaces that provide numerous opportunities for activities and events that are only limited by such factors as the height of the ceiling or the flooring material. The third position, environmental or architectural probabilism, characterizes the problematic relationship between students' behaviors and the physical environment (Strange & Banning, 2001). If a union has a help desk near the entrance, it is more likely to be utilized than one that is not easily accessible.

These positions play a crucial role in the overall student satisfaction and continued use of the student union. If the facility does not meet the students' needs or make them feel a sense of belonging, they will not use the amenities of the facility leading to students feeling and being less engaged. Strange and Banning (2001) allude to "the functional aspects of campus physical environments are designed and built, but the function of designing and building creates non-verbal messages that users of the campus environment then read" (p. 16). Unions serve as the center of campus life, meaning they should be inviting and full of appropriate non-verbal



messages. If a student walks into a student union and their first reaction is to leave because they see a set of doors leading out straight in front of them, there is a non-verbal message stating they are not to stay and be a part of the community.

It is important to note that while the union provides space for students to gather, it is just a space. As Butts (1951) stated, "a building, however well planned, does not by itself create campus unity, or provide a rewarding social experience for students, or introduce them to new cultural and recreational interests. It just makes these things possible" (p. 77). By understanding how students interact with the spaces designed for building community, one can effectively continue to meet the needs of the student population now and in the future. As the student population has and will continue to evolve, the spaces provided must adapt. As campus populations continue to change, the student union as a gathering space will need a built environment which is capable of responding to and meeting the communal campus needs.

### HEADING 3

#### CAMPUS ECOLOGY THEORY

Once a student steps foot onto their college campus, a critical relationship starts to develop between the student and their environment that influences the students' narratives and encourages students to cultivate their mindsets, perspectives, and beliefs (Mayhew et al., 2016; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). This relationship is conjectured as the campus ecology theory, a sweeping theory across many higher education disciplines. It is the concept of identifying the transactional relationship between students and their surrounding campus environment (Banning & Kaiser, 1974; Banning, 1978).

The groundwork of campus ecology is found in the work of social psychologist Kurt Lewin. Lewin's theory and the foundation of social psychology are that behavior is a function of the interaction between the individual and their environment (Banning & Bryner, 2001). Dating back to its origins in the 1970s, campus ecology theory developed out of a draft paper written by Leland Kaiser. The paper led to a Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education task force monograph entitled: *The Ecosystem Model: Designing Campus Environments* (1973). The monograph called for the development of a campus design methodology to better understand the influence environmental conditions have on the educational experience (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 1973). This monograph, along with other works, was the driving force behind the development and term "campus ecology" in higher education (Banning, 2016).

Campus ecology is "the behavioral study of the complex transactional relationships among the social and physical dimensions of campus environments and those who inhabit them – students, staff, faculty, and visitors" (Banning, 2012, para.1). Banning and Bryner (2001) further

stated that, “campus ecology is a conceptual framework focused on the dynamic relationship between students and the campus environment” (p. 9). Campus ecology explores the behavior of humans in relation to the physical and social environments on a college campus. It explores the relationship between how students influence the environment and how the environment influences the students.

Looking at its origin, the word ecology is derived from the Greeks and means the "study of the house" (Kormonday & Brown, 1998, p. 28). Ecology was not part of the scientific community until German scientist Ernst Haeckel presented the idea of ecology to concentrate on the connection between the environment and evolution (Kormonday & Brown, 1998). Originally defined by Ernest Haeckel in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, ecology was defined as “the study of the relationship of organisms with their environment” (Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies, 2020). Understanding how the relationships evolve between an individual and their environments, human ecology, leads to greater insight into the individual's behaviors.

Trying to understand the behavior without the environment and vice versa is futile. The person-environment interaction is key to developing a well-rounded understanding of human ecology. Exploring the relationship between a student and the university campus provides a focused understanding of the multitude of interdependent relationships among the organisms (students, faculty, and staff), environments (campus facilities and layout), and patterns or behaviors (learning, activities, and educational happenings) (Banning & Kuh, 2005). With an emphasis on how the ecology of the campus can sustain or hinder the traditional goals of student growth and development, campus exists as the “house” being studied.

### **Theoretical Foundations**

The theoretical groundwork for campus ecology theory is based on an ecological and

environmental approach that studies human behavior, the person-environment interaction, and the principles that encompass it. Constructed from the groundwork developed by the scholarship in ecological and environmental psychology and stemming from Lewin's person-environment theory developed in the 1930s, the fundamental assumption of the research is that outcomes occur because of the interaction between persons and their environments, and positive outcomes are the result of positive interactions (Banning & Bryner, 2001; Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006). While Lewin's theory is the catalyst for research on person-environment interactions, Walsh (1978) analyzed six specific theories directly correlated to the person-environment interaction. These theories outlined by Walsh (1978) provide a framework for the interactions and behavior of students in the environment and include: (a) Barker's theory of behavior settings, (b) the subculture approach, (c) Holland's theory of personality types and model environments, (d) Stern's need x press = culture theory, (e) Moo's social ecological approach, and (f) Pervin's transactional approach. These theories cultivate the theoretical foundation for campus ecology.

Barker's (1968) theory of behavior settings conveys that both the person and the environment must be considered in predicting behavior. Walsh (1978) pointed out that Barker's theory "maintains that both the individual and the environment must be taken into accounting in predicting behavior, his work emphasizes only the environmental component" (p. 8). Barker's work accentuates the effect of the environment on behavior, and that smaller environments lead to more personal satisfaction and productivity than larger, more populated environments.

The subculture approach is comparable to the theory of behavior in the sense that it does not consider the perceived interaction with the environment from the individuals' perspective. The approach is based on students forming subcultures centered around their similar attitudes, values, behaviors, and roles (Walsh, 1978). It assumes people enter and participate in

environments that fit within their personal attributes, finding others with similar or the same characteristics. Clark and Trow (1966) examined the subculture concept specific to students and their different ideals and institution and found that the dominant subgroup of students on campus shapes the campus culture at that time (Strange & Banning, 2001).

The foundation of Holland's (1959) Theory is that both person and environment influence human behavior. The theory assumes that individuals are measured by a cluster of character traits that form one of six personality types (Strange & Banning, 2001). Individuals have traits from all six types but are usually more dominant in one or two personality types. Connected with the personality types are related environments that are congruent and "lead to outcomes that are predictable and understandable" (Walsh, 1978, p. 10). The theory supports that when person-environment interactions happen, there is a deep connection between the personality type and environment, supporting personal satisfaction and stability in work and life.

The basis of Stern's (1935) theory is more holistic, taking into consideration the person and environment together. Stern's bases his theory on three assumptions: (a) the connection between the environment and the person shapes behavior, (b) the meaningfulness of the need is gathered from the behavior, and (c) the meaningfulness of the environment is gathered from behavioral observations (Walsh, 1978). "A need state is characterized by the tendency to perform actions of a certain kind," while press is "the characteristic demands or features of the environment as perceived by those who live in the particular environment" (Walsh, 1978, p.11). Stern's (1935) calculation for behavior in cultures,  $need \times press = culture \text{ theory}$ , assumes that behavior is developed from the connection between the environment (press) and the individual (needs).

Moos' (1974, 1976) social ecological approach points to both people and the

environment having distinctive and descriptive personalities that can be articulated. Two assumptions convey Moos' approach. The first assumption stresses that the social aspects of the environment may be implied by the individual's behavioral views. The second assumption is that perceived reality influences how individuals behave within a specific situation (Walsh, 1978). Moos' (1974, 1976) social ecological approach focuses on the individuals' perceived notions of the environment and the direct influence of those perceptions on the social environment.

The core of Pervin's (1967) transaction approach is that behavior is best understood by exploring the interactions between the individual and their surroundings. Based on three assumptions, Pervin (1967) noted that individuals see a drastic, often painful difference between how they perceive themselves and their ideal self. Secondly, people are drawn to objects that they see as helping them ascertain their ideal-self, and they push away objects that will hinder their realization of their ideal-self. The final assumption is that relationships with important objects are sought after when there is perceived or realized proximity to one's ideal-self and not sought after when there is a lack of ideal-self realized. The essence of Pervin's theory is "behavior can best be understood in terms of the perceived interactions between the individual and the environment by the individual's self-reported perceptions and his reactions to these perceptions" (Walsh, 1978, p.14).

The various person-environment theories play a critical role in the conceptualization and formation of campus ecology theory. By looking at human behavior in relation to the environment, campus ecology focuses on the person-environment interaction between students and the campus environment. This theoretical framework sets the foundation for gathering information, viewpoints, and experiences of how college students interact with their environments and the influence they pose on one another.

### **Central Assumptions of the Ecology Model**

The campus ecology “model begins with an assumption that student and campus are mutually shaping forces in the complex balance of institutional life” (Strange & Banning, 2001, p. 200). This perspective that the relationship between the student and their campus is an integral function of campus ecology theory and was established through the eight central assumptions or themes that frame the ecosystem model (Aulepp & Delworth, 1976; Kaiser, 1975; Strange & Banning, 2001). The assumptions appear in Figure 3 (page 31) and reviewed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Kaiser (1975) simply stated that “students are primarily motivated by a desire for experience” (p. 34). Human consciousness experiences a situation, interprets the experience throughout the situation, and processes and internalizes the new results from the experience (Kaiser, 1975). In relationship to a student and their college experience, the “students are where they have been, their consciousness is an ongoing total of their experience. Change the experience and the consciousness is altered” (Kaiser, 1975, p. 34). Creating memories and experiences are important to the student, and those experiences influence the student’s consciousness while also influencing the environment where the relationship is occurring. The second theme indicates that there is a transactional relationship occurring between the student and their environment that is influencing their consciousness. There is an influence of the environment on the individual and the individual on the environment. As Kaiser (1975) asserted, “all experience is gained in spaces” (p. 34). Space defines the variety of stimuli interacting with an individual at any point and time. Experiences can be both internally and externally within a space (Kaiser, 1975). The student's internal and external interaction with their environment needs to be carefully considered in the design and fulfillment of campus spaces.

1. A campus environment consists of all the stimuli that impinge upon the students' sensory modalities, including physical, chemical, biological, and social stimulation.
2. A transactional relationship exists between college students and their campus environment, i.e., the students shape the environment and are shaped by it.
3. For purposes of environmental design, the shaping properties of the campus environment are focused on; however, the students are still viewed as active, choice-making agents who may resist, transform, or nullify environmental influences.
4. Every student possesses the capacity for a wide spectrum of possible behaviors. A campus environment may facilitate or inhibit any one or more of those behaviors. The campus should be intentionally designed to offer opportunities, incentives, and reinforcements for growth and development.
5. Students will attempt to cope with any educational environment in which they are placed. If the environment is not compatible with the students, the students may react negatively or fail to develop desirable qualities.
6. Because of the wide range of individual differences among students, fitting the campus environment to the student requires the creation of a wide variety of campus subenvironments. There must be an attempt to design for the wide range of individual characteristics found among students.
7. Every campus has a design, even if the administration, faculty, and students have not planned it or are not consciously aware of it. A design technology for campus environments, therefore, is useful for both the analysis of existing campus environments and the design of new ones.
8. Successful campus design depends on input from all campus members including students, faculty, staff, administration, and trustees or regents.

### **Figure 3**

#### *The Eight Themes of Campus Ecology*

*Note.* The eight themes are the theoretical core of campus ecology. Adapted from the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education publication *The Ecosystem Model; Designing Campus Environments*, 1973, L. Kaiser's original publication *Designing Campus Environments*, 1975, and updated in C. Strange and J. Banning, *Educating by Design: Creating Campus Learning Environments That Work*, 2001, pp. 200-202.

The third concept reveals that students may not react in the manner that was planned;



they may change, reverse, or even entirely resist the environmental influences as they were initially designed (Kaiser, 1975). The environment can either enable or inhibit a student's realization, leading to the student's decisions on how to interact with the space. The student is always an active participant in the environment, according to the third assumption.

As the environment is designed to shape the student, the student has every opportunity to be empowered within the space or change the space to meet their demands. The fundamental concept is that within the various campus spaces available, a student is just as much a change element as the environment. When combined with assumptions two and four, these three themes connect to show the transactional relationship that is developed between the student and the campus environment, enforcing the campus ecology theory.

Themes four, five, and six acknowledge the diversity of the student population and how their interactions will vary with others and their environment (Kaiser, 1975). These themes emphasize the need for intentionality in design to offer multiple opportunities and reinforcements for students to develop and grow. Students will cope within the campus environment to a certain extent, but an environment that is not conducive will lead to negative behaviors and outcomes. Due to the great diversity of students, there is no one size fits all approach, but rather a clustering of overlapping subenvironments designed to push students outside of their subgroup while providing a level of satisfaction and safety for them.

The seventh theme observes that every campus has an environment design, whether it is planned or spontaneous (Kaiser, 1975). This certainty indicates that the college administration must continually analyze the current environments and their influences while making changes and improvements to affect positive student growth and development. The continual evaluation of the campus environment is essential when the opportunities for change or additions are made

available. Without evaluating the current environments, campus administrators will fall behind on meeting their students' needs, which will directly impact recruitment and retention while also having a significant impact on the long-term future environment.

The final theme portrays the importance of input into the design of the campus environment. Engagement with students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, community collaborators, and others, links directly back to several of the themes discussed earlier including the students as active participants, the diversity of the student population coupled with their numerous subsections, and the design and use of the campus by these groups (Kaiser, 1975). These constituency groups can and will provide feedback and support in a variety of means that is crucial to the future success of the campus environment. Successful campus design is particularly dependent upon the campus inhabitants sharing their sense of community and belonging with those who have financial influence over the campus such as legislatures and alumni. A healthy and robust support system is vital to the current and future ecology of the university campus.

Strange and Banning (2001) emphasized how the eight themes of campus ecology affect a campus and interact with one another:

These assumptions underscore the point that college and university environments are complex, dynamic phenomena; any change in one component will likely manifest itself in changes in other components. Likewise, failure to attend to other components may jeopardize attempts to change only one (p. 202).

The campus environment and students equally exert themselves on one another, with one being more influential than the other depending on the design of the space, how individuals interact within and with the space during a specific time, and the current campus culture and needs. As

those factors change, the ecology of the space and the dynamic interactions change leading to a necessary heightened understanding of the environment and the needs coupled with constant fluidity from administrators.

### **Person-Environment Interactions**

Holland “based his person-environment theory on the belief that behavior is a function of congruence between a person and the psychological environment” (Neufeld et al., 2006, p. 5). Holland asserted that people participate in an environment because they find themselves having similar interests to others in the environment. Individuals find themselves becoming more productive and satisfied in these environments and more willing to extend their time there. If these characteristics were not manifested, one would leave the environment for a more conducive environment.

Person-environment theory, coupled with the campus ecology theory, calls attention to the influence students have on their campus environment and the influence the campus has on the student. The relationship between them exists because the students need the environment to reach their educational goals and the campus environment needs the students to persist. As Banning (1978) stated, campus ecology “is the study of the relationship between the student and the campus environment” (p. 5). The human environment that is created on a campus affects the behaviors of the students, which in turn affects the environment; this influence is a transactional relationship. Moos (1976) and Strange and Banning (2001) indicate, there are four core constructs of the human environment: (a) the physical environment, (b) human characteristics, (c) the organizational structures, and (d) constructed environments.

### ***Physical Environment***

A college campus's physical environment creates the first impression for a potential

student and their family as they arrive on campus. It will directly influence the student for the duration of their time on campus. The physical environment is the natural and human-constructed aspects such as the layout of campus, the ease of accessibility, cleanliness, well-manicured landscape, interior design colors and layouts, the library, recreation center, student support services, and the friendliness of the students on campus that leave an impression on a student (Strange & Banning, 2001). The campus's physical environment influences a student's actions and behaviors as it provides multiple opportunities for various responses and reactions from the student, all influencing their consciousness.

The physical environment promotes or restricts certain behaviors depending on the people in the environment and the atmosphere (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The environment sets the stage for the interactions the students will encounter. Strange and Banning (2001) expound that the functional aspects of the campus environment are intentionally designed and constructed; however, the construction and design develop non-verbal messages the campus inhabitants read. The nonverbal messages often become the campus' truths, whether they are intentional or unintentional, favorable or unfavorable to the campus. For example, campus marketing materials that do not show a diverse student population do not send a sense of inclusion and belonging for other groups. A favorable example would be to have wayfinding signage throughout campus, both exterior to facilities and in the interior, assisting individuals in easily finding their way around campus. By developing positive physical features with positive nonverbal messages, campus inhabitants will feel a stronger sense of belonging, safety, and loyalty to the institution.

To create and maintain a healthy physical environment on campus, it is important to view the environment from the perspective of the students who are navigating the environment

regularly. Not only does this provide feedback for those maintaining the campus, but it also provides learning opportunities for the students. Participation from all users will not only assist in eliminating unintended nonverbal messages, but it provides a sense of community, pride, and belonging. Feeling included in campus decisions will lead students, faculty, and staff to be more connected to the campus and community.

### ***Human Characteristics***

Every individual has their own set of unique characteristics that make them who they are and influences their decisions. The development of one's identity is a significant undertaking associated with the college experience (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The variety of characteristics that college students have profoundly influences the relationships they develop with the physical environment of their campus. Socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, first-generation college student, physical ability, determination, and family mobility are a few characteristic examples that can affect how students interact with their environment. Each student is at a different stage in their human development, which can prompt distinctive decisions leading to further growth for each student. These decisions are also influenced by their peers who have their own unique set of characteristics that influence their decisions. According to Astin (1993), a student's peer group has a prevalent influence on multiple aspects of their development, leading to students changing their beliefs, actions, and majors to follow their peer group.

The characteristics of an environment are contingent on the characteristics of its inhabitants. A college campus is represented by the students, alumni, faculty, and staff who represent it both internally and externally of the environment. The collective characteristics of these individuals can and will influence others' perceptions of the environment built at the

campus. "Individuals create or define environments even as these environments attract other individuals and help socialize them to maintain the interests, attitudes, values, and behaviors of all occupants" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 47). The history of a space or organization can also create a perception of the space or organization. With a transient student population, a collegial environment can and will be different from year to year.

### ***Organizational Structures***

The organizational structure of a college campus plays an essential role in the student's overall campus experience. It significantly shapes and influences the behavior of the students and other inhabitants within the environment. Several factors can affect the purpose and direction of the larger campus organization. Budget cuts, leadership changes, new programs, the loss of services, campus morale, and staffing changes are but a few events that can create waves on a campus, sometimes tearing it down while other times making it more robust. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) highlighted, "organizational environments may be static or dynamic, depending on their resistance or responsiveness to change" (p. 47), and the ability to manage such change will affect the campus and the campuses' ability to respond effectively and efficiently. In turn, the campus leaderships capacity to manage and deal with change affects the students and others populating the campus.

On a different organizational level, providing students with opportunities to become involved and be leaders on campus creates another organizational structure on campus. There are several formal and informal opportunities for students to organize on a campus, which allows them to create their own learning and personal development opportunities (Kuh et al., 1991). Registered student organizations, including student government, union board, residence hall association, and academically or civically minded organizations, provide students with

opportunities for personal and professional growth and development outside of the classroom environment while still within the campus's safety net. These experiences create a multitude of different subenvironments for the students to develop and gain new relationships, knowledge, comprehension, and skills within the safety of the campus environment while being allowed to push their personal boundaries.

### ***Constructed Environments***

The different ways individuals construct, perceive, evaluate, and relate to their environment influence their behaviors. One's perceptions of the environment is their reality within that environment. How the individual experiences and understands their environment provides the best predictors of their behavior while engaging in the environment. Strange and Banning (2001) concluded there is a "common focus on participant perceptions, impressions, and systems of meaning making in understanding the nature of campus environments" (p. 106) through the concepts of the environmental press, social climate, and campus culture. The environmental press is the demand of the environment as seen or felt by those in the environment. The social climate is broken down into three dimensions: relationship, personal growth and development, and system maintenance and system change (Strange & Banning, 2001). The dimensions will vary, given the environment. Campus culture is the traditions, rituals, memories, history, mission, and policies of the campus as perceived by the campus members past and present. All campuses develop an environment that influences individuals to become members of the culture.

The campus culture helps students identify, define, and understand their campus experience and provides meaning to the experience. The culture helps the student construct their environment, which provides opportunities to be part of the community, grow and develop as an

individual and team member, and define their goals. The construction of these elements on their campus are key to understanding the behavior of the student in their environment. By knowing the campus' culture and understanding the students' behaviors and how it influences the culture, the university administrators can focus their time and resources in the direction that best embraces the needs of the majority of the campus while still meeting the overall goals of the campus.

### **Person-Environment Interactions and the Ecology of Student Development**

People interact with their environment and surroundings in their own way, making each interaction unique to the individual. Each student interacts with the campus environment in their own distinctive way, leading to their personal experiences of campus. Every college and university have their own distinctive identity cultivated by key components such as the number of students, its history, traditions on the campus, the socioeconomic status of students, as well as many more identifiers. Moos (1978) also laid out the groundwork for identifying dimensions applicable to the campus environment. His characteristics of the campus include the geography, weather conditions based on the location, campus architectural and physical elements, the behavioral characteristics of the people, the social and behavioral venues (libraries, classrooms, laboratories, residence halls, and unions), aspects of organizational structure, organizational climate, and campus reward structures. Each identifier has a lasting imprint on the current campus culture and how the students interact with the campus cultivates the campus ecology. Renn and Patton (2011) emphasized how architecture, technology, and facility design force people to adapt spaces to fit their needs; however, these matters also shape how the people live, learn, and work. Knowledge of how students engage and navigate their campus environment is “an important element in understanding contexts for leadership, organizational change, and



student learning and development” (Renn & Patton, 2011, p. 242).

Person-environment theories and models focus on the influence of the environment on the person's behavior through its interactions with the individual's characteristics. According to Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), these theories and models “make no attempt to explain either the nature or specific processes of student development or growth” (p. 46). This enforces the importance of recognizing that while the college experience is influential on a student, several outside factors also affect a student's growth and development that are not directly connected to their college experience. These theories and models provide a framework for understanding the relationship between a student and their university environment but cannot fully explain the student's growth and development.

According to Astin (1993), “the student’s peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years” (p. 398). Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) asserted that “as the individual gains experience and confidence, external controls on behavior slowly give way to the internal controls” (p. 48). This is consistent with Chickering’s seven vectors of student development model, which illustrates that students move through college and transform, each at their own pace. The seven vectors illustrate how a student’s development in the college setting can affect them emotionally, socially, physically, and intellectually. By engaging with their campus environment, students develop competence and gain confidence in their abilities and relationships while learning to be more self-sufficient. This leads to emotional and instrumental independence as the student becomes more self-sufficient, stops relying on others to assist them in making decisions, and begins to rely more on their own beliefs and opinions while becoming more critical in their thinking (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). “Developing autonomy culminates in the recognition that one cannot operate in a

vacuum and that greater autonomy enables healthier forms of interdependence” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 47).

The campus environment encourages and supports students as they pursue their interests, develop critical thinking skills, and become more civically minded by engaging them in the four core constructs of the human environment while understanding the student's desire to experience the environment. Dependent on other vectors, students establish an identity for themselves and their campus through their interactions with the environment. The ecosystem provides students with experiences that push them to develop who they are and find their purpose while developing integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

### **Using Campus Ecology Theory to Improve Service**

Campus ecology theory and its supporting theoretical framework demonstrates the importance of the relationship between a person and their surrounding environment. The goal of colleges and universities as defined by Strange and Banning (2001) is to:

establish conditions to attract, satisfy, and retain students for purposes of challenging them to develop qualities of the educated person, including a capacity for complex critical reasoning, communication, leadership, a sense of identity and purpose, an appreciation for differences, and a commitment to lifelong learning. (p. 2)

To accomplish these goals, it is encouraged that university administrators are purposeful in developing their environments, rather than hoping their goals are met by happenstance. The creation of well thought out environments develops a positive and engaging relationship which retains students while challenging them within a safe yet challenging environment.

### ***Campus Design Matrix***

Strange and Banning (2001) developed the campus design matrix to assist administrators

with an evaluation of the campus environment in relationship to campus ecology. The matrix focuses on three critical questions:

1. What components are involved in this particular environmental assessment or action?
2. What is the impact of the current design?
3. What is the intended focus or purpose of this design? (Strange & Banning, 2001 p. 203)

These questions inform administrators of the current campus climate and future campus environment needs. The first question relates to the four core constructs of the human environment explained above and any direct concern related to them. The question focuses on where the challenge stems from, the physical, aggregate, organizational, or constructed construct. The second question allows for the evaluation of the influence of the environmental design from positive to negative. The negative environments are those that stress, limit, or inhibit behaviors, while the positive environments allow the behavior to occur while stimulating and challenging students to grow (Strange & Banning, 2001). The final component of the campus design matrix identifies the purpose of the design of the physical environment. It brings into question the topics of safety, inclusion, involvement, and community.

Campus administrators can use the campus design matrix in a variety of functions. By utilizing this tool, administrators can evaluate the current campus environment while looking for situations that necessitate extra attention. The matrix also provides a guide in planning new facilities, program evaluations, new services to offer, or renovations on campus. This level of evaluation provides not only campus administrators, but also architects, campus planners, and students with insight into potential challenges that may be alleviated before a real concern exists or to have responses ready when potential challenges cannot be alleviated.

## **Using Campus Ecology Theory**

Administrators should focus on the environment as the place where change can be made to facilitate transformation rather than trying to change the students to fit the environment. Looking through the ecological perspective that Banning and Kaiser (1974) define as the transaction between the student and their environment, administrators can see and understand the relationships that evolve and influence the student and the environment. While not focusing specifically on the characteristics of the student or the environment, the focus must be turned to the transactional relationship between the two providing a broader picture and perspective on the needs of both the student and the environment as they coexist.

Physical spaces on college campuses provide opportunities for students to interact with not only one another but the faculty, staff, and community. Creating well-rounded, intentional spaces that meet the needs of all the participants is vital to creating a sense of belonging and community. To enhance the overall sense of community, providing students with a voice in the needs of space development offers a distinctive perspective for student development and engagement. By gathering responses from the campus inhabitants about the physical spaces of campus, administrators not only gain insight into the needs of the constituents, but they also gain support and trust, even more so when they follow through on requested changes.

Often university administrators inherit facilities and programs that were designed to meet the needs of a different generation. There are concerns with accessibility, safety, inclusion, and engagement. Here is where tenets of campus ecology can be applied to get the most out of what is available. Being flexible and creative will lead to overcoming physical limitations and maximizing potential across the campus. For example, combining campus departments that do similar programmatic work for campus into one office where all questions can be directed

creates a streamline of information while making it easier for students and others to find the information they seek. It is important for administrators to see the whole picture before they start making sweeping changes but by remaining fluid and flexible, campus administrators can meet the campus's needs while meeting the institutional goals.

Utilizing Strange and Banning's (2001) campus design matrix, which is influenced by the four core constructs of the human environment, student affairs professionals can apply the three questions to their facilities, programs, and services to better understand the current and future concerns on their campuses. For instance, by analyzing various forms of communication such as websites, social media, and other marketing mediums through the eyes of students, families, alumni, and colleagues, campuses can better understand how they are viewed in meeting the goals of the institution. Often these mediums are the first point of reference for potential students. If they do not display a sense of community, inclusion, safety, and engagement, the potential student does not become an enrolled student.

It is also essential to know the type of students one is working with on the campus. Understanding the campus demographics that are easily attainable such as race, gender, age, and socioeconomic status, will provide a broad view of the student population. Administrators will need to dig deeper on a personal level with the students to attain information such as sexual orientation, introvert/extrovert, and socialization preferences, to name a few. Gathering a holistic picture of the student body will help administrators use the campus ecology theory to understand the student's needs and provide the environment that produces successful students. It becomes their duty to design and provide diverse indoor and outdoor spaces purposefully created to enable social connections and support academic achievement.

Campus ecology theory plays a key role in the overall success of every college and

university campus. The transactional relationship created with a student and their campus environment is influential for the duration of the student's time on campus. The campus cannot survive without the students while the students gain valuable experiences from the campus environment. This collaborative engagement will only help, not hinder, the development of the student and the campus environment.

## **HEADING 4**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The college union is known as the living room of campus. It has a significant purpose in providing to the overall campus experience for the students and campus community. The influence the physical space of a student union can have on the interactions among students and their sense of belonging in the campus environment served as a focal point of my project. By stressing the importance of understanding the role that purposeful design of physical space can have on the university community and specifically on the ability to build community for the students, I designed a space focused on building and sustaining community.

A goal of my professional career is to be involved in the renovation or building of a new student union on a college campus. When I was in high school I took a year-long basic architecture class where I had the opportunity to fully design a house and during that class I found a passion for design and architecture. While it was my initial professional path, it did not lead to a full-time career in the field. The year spent discovering architecture did developed a deeper understanding for what a facility needs to be functional and all the work that goes into designing a space. To this day, I still love to look at blueprints, design spaces, and figure out the best layout and needs of a facility.

This specific project was developed from my aspiration to be part of a legacy on a college campus in the form of a building, specifically a student union. Coupled with my current student affairs career, building a student union for the students of today and the future meets my goal by combining my passion for architecture with my professional goals of providing opportunities and experiences for students. While an exciting task, it was not a simple one. A multitude of decisions go into the development and design of what will be a long-lasting, state of the art,

multi-million dollar invest for the university. Trying to meet the needs of most students and stay within campus guidelines and budget boundaries are just a few of the constraints placed on a building project.

With the building boom of student unions in the 1960s and 1970s (Butts, 1951), most college campuses today are currently dealing with aging facilities coupled with deteriorating infrastructures. The facilities built during that timeframe do not meet the current wants and needs of the students of today and the future leading to more reasons for transformation. The options facing administrators are to renovate current facilities or construct a new facility, both come with a hefty price tag.

As each campus has a different demographic of students, faculty, and staff, I initially took into consideration those demographics along with the physical environment and current state of the campus and universities across the country. By understanding those two aspects, I could start to build out the framework of the needs of the campus. This project started out as a list of spaces that needed to be included and excluded from the facility design to meet the campus demand. Years of experience, review of several student unions across the country, and a multitude of conversations with colleagues lead to my decisions of what should be included and what should not find a home in the facility. By talking with colleagues and students and hearing what they currently appreciate and wish for, the list changed and morphed throughout the process.

From the list of concepts to be placed within the walls, I began to sketch out various ideas in a notebook. I started with ideas for the exterior of the facility which came from past visits to student unions throughout the country as well as looking at various facilities in magazines and online. Facilities such as hospitals, office buildings, and other campus buildings molded my concept for the exterior. Other factors considered in designing the exterior were the campus



master plan, the climate, the overall size of the campus, and the way people traverse campus.

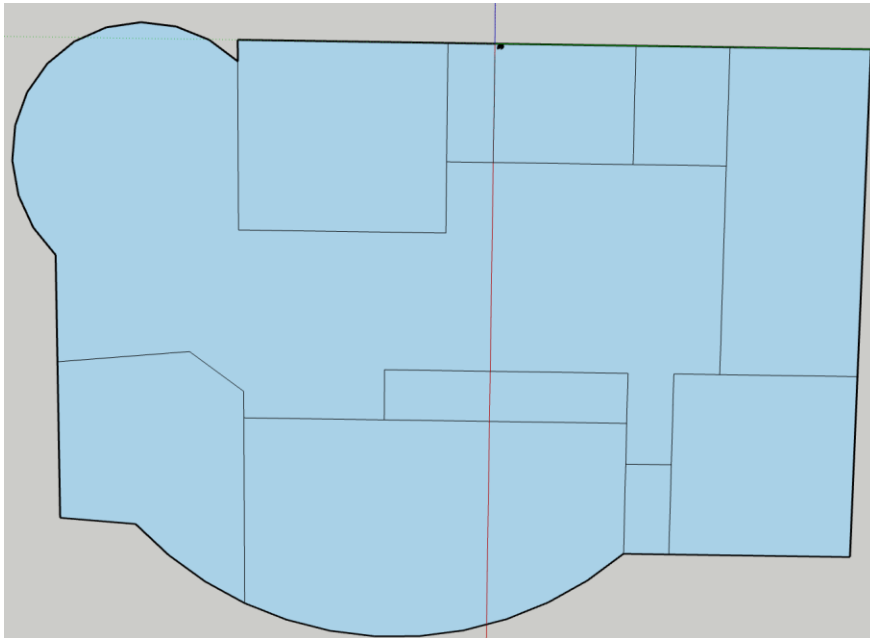
Once I had a suitable idea of the exterior façade, I started to sketch concepts for the footprint of the first floor, the focal point of the space, and from there moved to the other floors. I looked at a variety of other universities union floor plans, dining concepts, office layouts, and meeting spaces on their respective websites while also recalling visits to various schools. From these schools I found components that seemed to work well and others that did not work as well and found it insightful to learn from both. Universities that I included in my research were Oklahoma State University, Kansas State University, Ohio State University, North Carolina State University, Washington University in St. Louis, University of Illinois, University of Missouri - St. Louis, University of Arizona, and Florida Gulf Coast University.

It became evident as I was sketching out conceptual ideas of spaces within the building, that not everything I initially wanted in the facility would fit or meet the goals and mission of the facility and campus. No building will ever be able to meet all the needs of every individual which was reinforced through this process. Limitations in scope include the footprint of the building, the overall capacity of the project, the mission and vision of the facility and of the campus, and the budget available for the project.

After sketching out the initial concepts on paper for about ten days with several ideas abandoned and numerous revisions to ideas, I proceeded to the program SketchUp, a free web-based design software. There was a definite learning curve with using the program as it was my first time, but with the help of Brandon Macier I was able to learn the basics quickly. He had previous experience with the program and took an hour to show me how to use the essential elements and components of the program. After his tutorial, I began to work within the program regularly to get a feel for how it functioned. Brandon assisted several times throughout the

design with several aspects of the facility.

Starting with the exterior outline, I developed the main structure for the entire facility. From there I moved my way in to see what would fit and what would not fit within the confines of the facility. I took my design ideas from the sketchbook and started to layout space in the building with simple lines. I started with a basic one-dimensional model of each floor as shown in Figure 4. Once I had the basic outline of the first floor, I copied it to make the additional two floors above ground that would mimic the first floor. This allowed me to take into consideration square footage, location of different spaces, and infrastructure while getting a good feeling for the flow and traffic patterns the building would have upon completion.



**Figure 4**

*One Dimension Drawing*

At this point, I printed off each floor and started labeling spaces to ensure I had the components I wanted within the structure. I received feedback from union staff and my advisor. After making several revisions to every floor and once I felt comfortable with the layout of each

floor and individual space, I started to build out each space in 3D images from the ground up. I started by rendering the walls. Once the walls were in place I could add doors, insert furniture and fixtures, and add flooring and wall surfaces. Each space has a unique layout that took time to customize with these features. To ensure uniformity with items such as the restrooms and elevators, components were copied from floor to floor.

SketchUp met the basic needs to design the fundamental outline of the structure and the individual spaces. While Sketchup provides an extensive library of components to add to the design, the software does have some limitations as to fully executing design ideas with what is offered. I used the pre-existing components to provide an idea of what it would look like once these items were in place. These likely would not be a true replication of what it would look like in real life. I did take into consideration using similar office furniture, doors, shelving, flooring surfaces, wall covering, chairs, and tables throughout the facility as a potential cost savings and maintenance measure for the longevity of the facility. Another limitation of SketchUp was, as a web-based program, at times when adding large components or trying to move around the design, the system would slow down significantly and at times even crash and not save work.

Numerous hours were put into the design within SketchUp. Over the course of eight weeks, I would design and redesign spaces until I felt they adequately depicted what I wanted in the facility. I could easily spend several more hours continuing to change and tweak the design. I asked Brandon Macier for help along the way with overall design, component placement, taking components apart to make them work for the design, fixing walls, and so on. It is not a perfect rendering, and it could not be used to build the facility, but it provides a strong conceptual layout of what the facility would look like at completion. I am sure items would be value engineered out of the project as the design phase continued as I already had to remove concepts that did not fit

within the design.

## **HEADING 5**

### **EXPLANATION OF THE STUDENT UNION**

The student union serves as the epicenter of campus, a place where all students feel a sense of belonging and connection to the university. To accomplish this, the various spaces in the facility need to be welcoming, engaging, and connected to the students and the university community. While the union is focused on the students, it must also be a place for faculty and staff to be a part of campus life. The student union needs to be centrally located on campus for everyone to have easy access to the facility. The facility needs to provide the services that students, faculty, and staff on campus are looking for which includes food, meeting spaces, social opportunities, support for events, necessary services to navigate campus and more.

#### **Gulf State University**

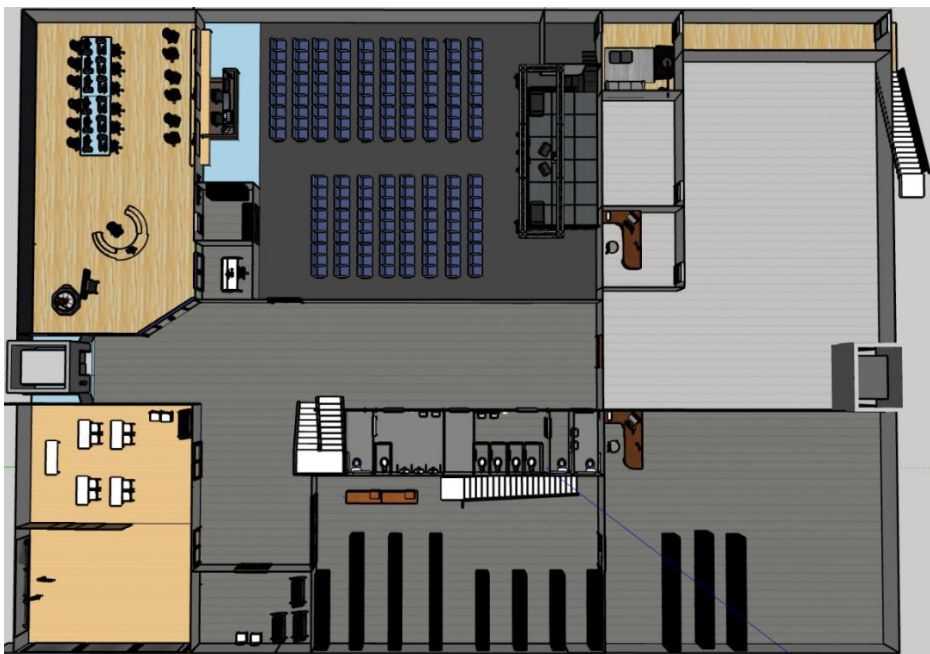
Gulf State University is situated in a humid, subtropical environment in the United States. The average temperature ranges from 54 degrees to 84 degrees Fahrenheit throughout the year. While there is no snowfall in this area, rainfall averages around six inches per month with the summer months seeing the highest rainfall. The climate averages 12 hours of daylight throughout the year, with the summer months averaging 14 hours per day.

Gulf State University is around 60 years old and is a part of the state university system. Currently the university has between 12,000 and 13,000 undergraduate and graduate students annually and is looking to grow enrollment to 15,000 over the next four years. As a public institution, funding is received primarily through state funds, tuition, and fees. The student union is funded from fees paid by students as well as funds received from dining, catering, and events. The student union falls under the Vice President of Academic Engagement and Student Affairs as an auxiliary service to the campus.

Spread out on 1,600 acres in an urban community, the university offers traditional residential housing, residential apartments, and family housing for 4,000 students. The student population is 54% female and 46% male. The student demographics are 60% white, 18% Hispanic, 13% Black, 4% Asian, 3% non-resident alien, 2% unreported. Residential dining is offered in one dining hall and the union. Students can utilize dining dollars in all food service within the union.

### **Basement**

The basement of the facility will provide space for activities such as e-sports, dance, movies, performances, and more (see Figure 5 below). It will house a generous area for textbook services and the support space essential to the bookstore operations. It will serve as the office and support area for maintenance and custodial operations. The utilization of a floor below grade will provide direct access of several utilities into the facility for ease of maintenance.



**Figure 5**

*Basement Overview*

## Maintenance and Custodial

The student union has a vast array of events, services, and facilities that will need custodial and maintenance services. The importance of an effective maintenance and custodial program cannot be overlooked because it plays such an important role in the effectiveness and efficiency of the entire facility. If the facility is not clean and well maintained, patrons will not use the facility which defeats the purpose of a student union. Maintenance and custodial staff will need space to perform routine maintenance, store supplies and materials, and have a space to conduct their business (see Figure 6 below). These services rely heavily on the internet and servers to control the HVAC units, fire suppression systems, building access, cameras as well as the ordering of parts and supplies. An office spaces will be needed for this department to support the staff of all the areas.



**Figure 6**

*Maintenance and Custodial Area*

## Gulf Coast Gamers E-Sports

Students are looking to fill the hours they are not in class or studying and the student union needs to provide the services that fill that time. A variety of services can fill that void. One such way is to provide an E-sports area that includes 16 computer gaming stations, three remote gaming stations, and other various video games (see Figure 7 below). With software allowing access to multiple games, club teams and competitive gaming teams for the University will utilize the space for practice and competition. This space will be set up to allow for free play for all students. The 1,680-square-foot gaming center will be staffed by a full-time employee who will coach the teams. Student employees will also support the space.



**Figure 7**

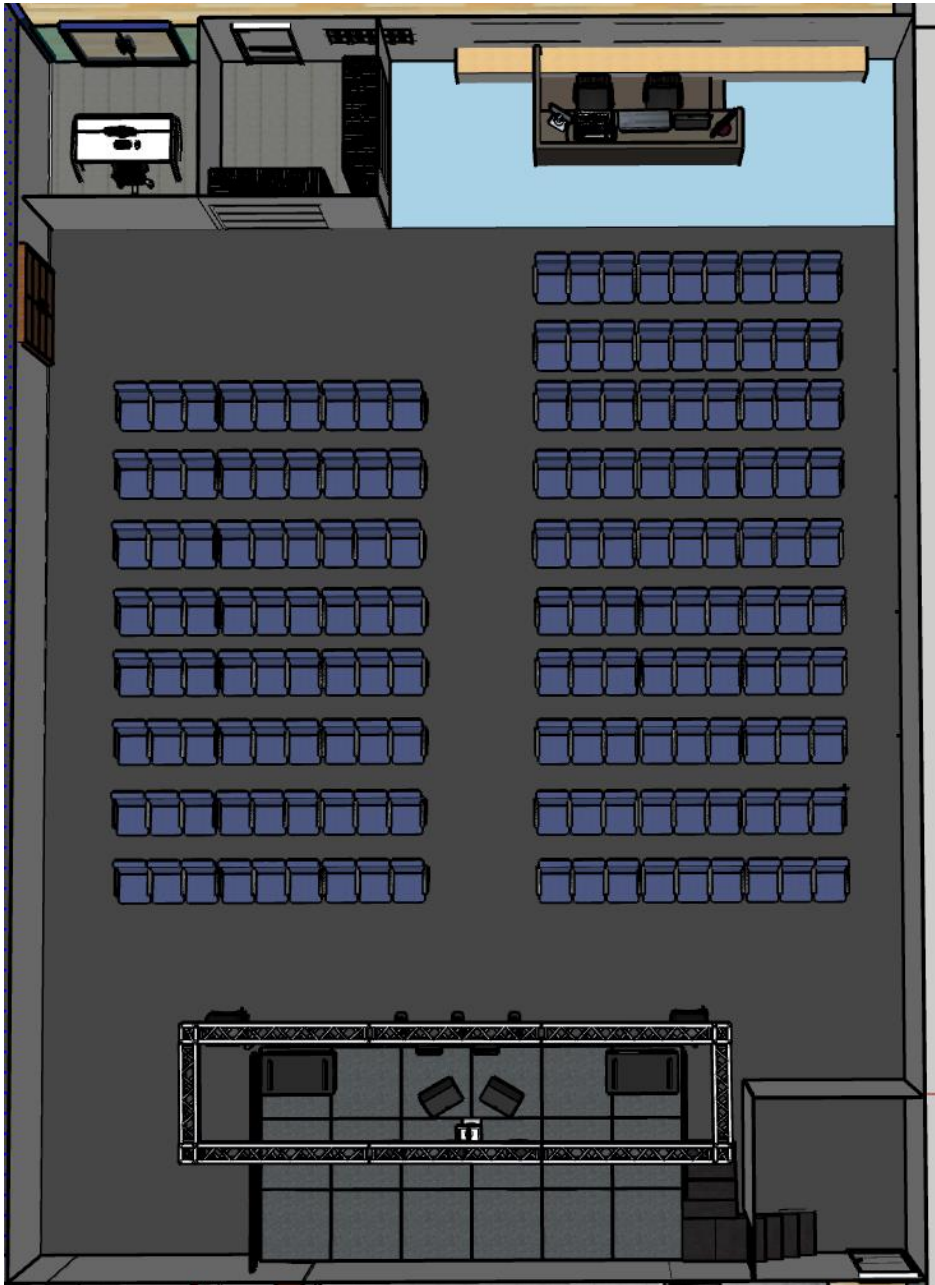
### *E-Sports Arena*

*Note.* The arena will include virtual reality, competitive gaming stations, and remote-control gaming options. Space is supported by an office for staff support and a storage room.

## Auditorium and Green Room

A 180-seat auditorium with state-of-the-art sound will be able to host everything from classes to movies to lecture series (see Figure 8 on page 56). The seating will be supportive and





**Figure 8**

*Auditorium*

*Note.* A 180-seat auditorium with stage, sound booth, and ADA seating.

comfortable and will have a tablet arm on each chair. The stage will be equipped with state-of-the-art sound supported by a full production sound booth. It will include side stages on both

sides for access and production opportunities. The room will have internal sound insulation while being acoustically designed and built for the best sound quality. Also taken into consideration will be the HVAC sounds and any sounds from surrounding rooms that might affect overall sound quality.

Behind the stage will be a full green room for speakers to wait and lounge before, during, and after a performance or show when they are not engaged on stage (see Figure 9 below). The room will be equipped with a private restroom as well as a small wet bar. To support speakers and lecture series an accessible green room is a key function to provide well-known speakers the ability to easily access the auditorium.



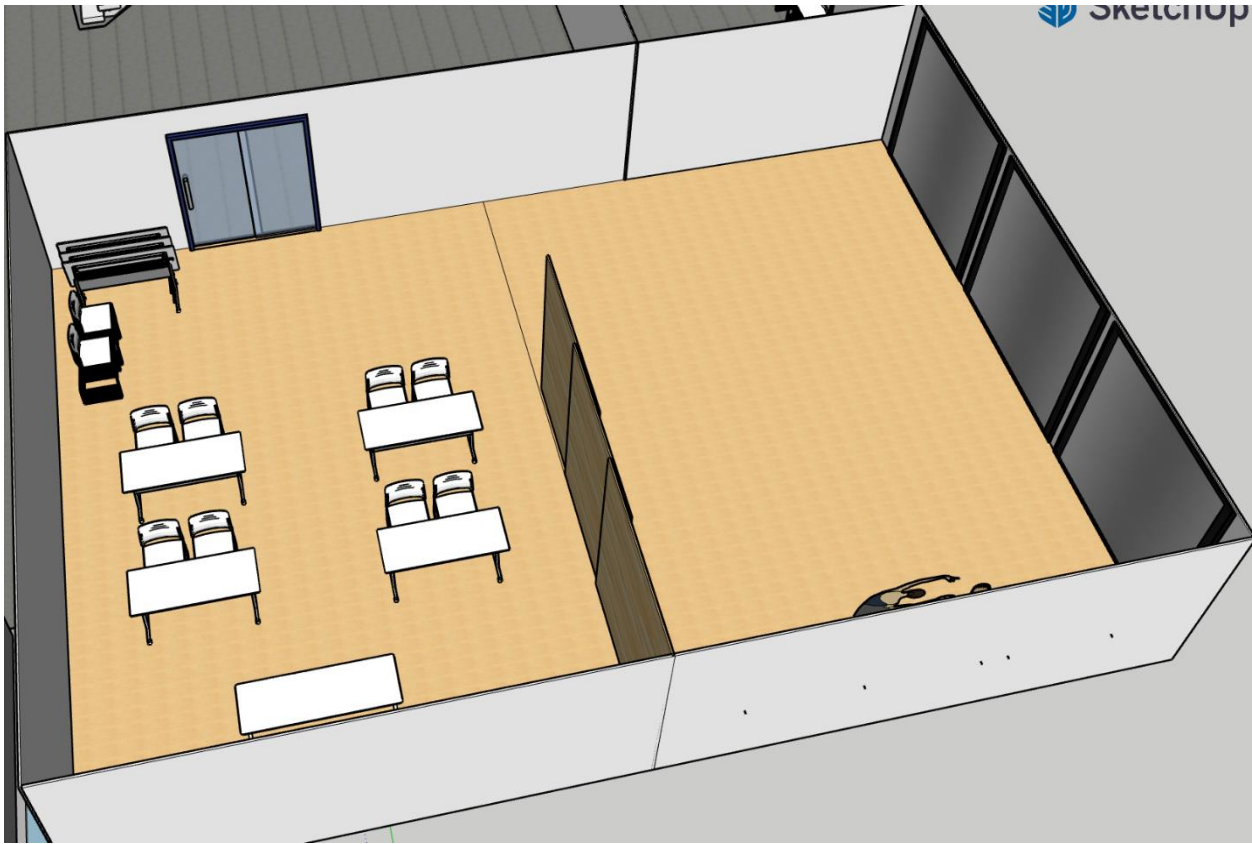
**Figure 9**

*Green Room*

*Note.* Waiting room and lounge space for performers to wait before going on stage in the auditorium.

**Multipurpose Studio**

A 1,260-square-foot multipurpose room geared towards the variety of dance groups that are looking for space across campus will also provide extra meeting space when there is a high need for space (see Figure 10 on page 58). These spaces will have a floor that is conducive to



**Figure 10**

*Multipurpose Room*

*Note.* Designed to provide dance space as well as meeting rooms. Space can be divided into two rooms.

dancing while still able to play host to meetings. The room will have a sprung floor that will be gentle on the dancers yet durable for the daily wear and tear it may receive from being a dance space as well as a back-up meeting room. The room will be able to be divided into two smaller spaces with mirrors are one wall in each smaller space.

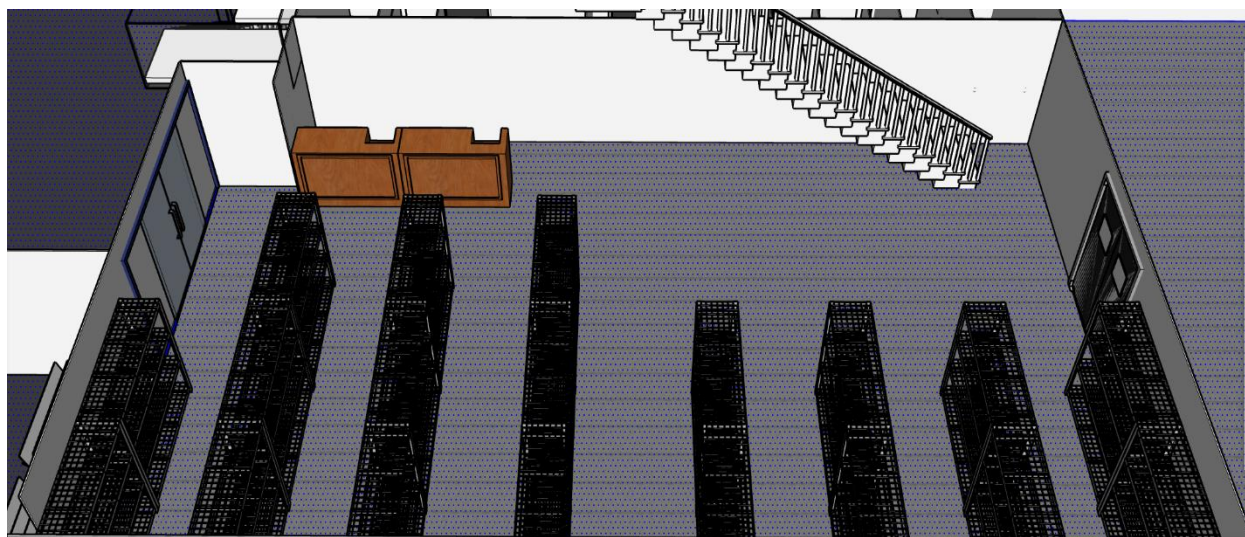
**Storage**

Storage is a necessity on all floors. A 300-square-foot storage room will be located between the dance studio and Textbook Services. This storage space will accommodate chairs,

tables, and other equipment to support meetings in the Multipurpose Studio. It will also allow for the storage of cleaning supplies for custodial staff.

### **Bookstore – Textbook Services**

The lower level of the bookstore will be housed the basement (see Figure 11 below). This area will be primarily designated for textbook services. It will be accessible directly off the elevator and through a set of doors from an open lounge space. Textbook Services will also have the potential to be closed off when textbook services are in low demand. The ability to close off this area will have a direct effect on staffing costs and increase efficiency within the bookstore. Immediately connected to Textbook Services will be a large back of house space for the bookstore with access to the service elevator. This space will serve as the main storage location for the bookstore.



**Figure 11**

#### *Textbook Services*

*Note.* Connected with the Bookstore on the first floor, Textbook Services provides access to all textbooks and associated goods.

## First Floor

The first floor, the main floor of the facility, will serve as the epicenter of the facility (see Figure 12 below). Being home to the food court, coffee and juice bar, bookstore, and large open lounge space, this is the place students will go to find friends, hang out, and be seen. This location is designed to support and build that sense of community that grounds students in their relationship to Gulf State University. As architect Stephen Lacker (2014) states, “the modern student union is a one-stop shop that merges student life and curricular needs, providing space for student organizations, career advancement, events, entertainment, dining, study, and more” (para. 3).



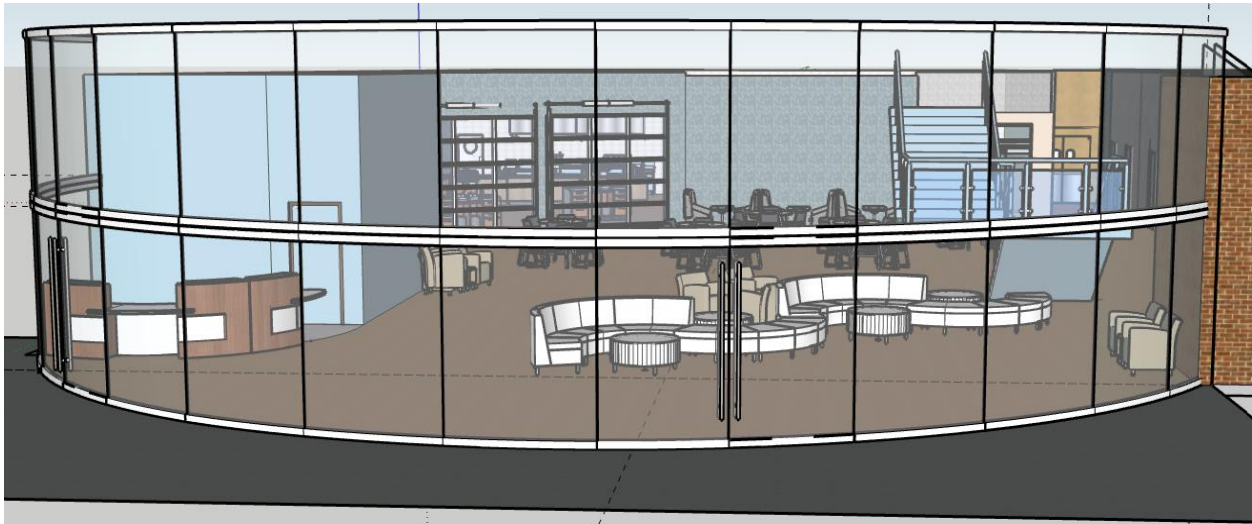
**Figure 12**

*First Floor Overview*

*Note.* The living room of campus, the first floor serves as the base of community building.

## Entrance

As the threshold between the exterior and interior, the building entrance will provide the patrons with their first impression of the student union (see Figure 13 below). An open atrium to the second floor will provide a large welcoming environment where students will want to hang out and see their classmates and friends. The two-floor open air atrium will have a large circular wall of windows and an open area all the way to the food court area. An open-air staircase in the entrance will provide easy access to the second floor. Beyond the stairs will be the restrooms, access to the bookstore, coffee and juice bar, and more.



**Figure 13**

### *Entrance Featuring Welcome Desk and Atrium*

The space will be flanked by a welcome desk that will provide assistance to patrons, schedule spaces within the facility, check out equipment, provide lost and found, provide temporary parking passes, and a variety of other services. It will be staffed with students and supported by full-time staff. The Welcome Desk can positively impact patrons, students, faculty, staff, vendors, and other guests as they enter the student union.

## Food Service

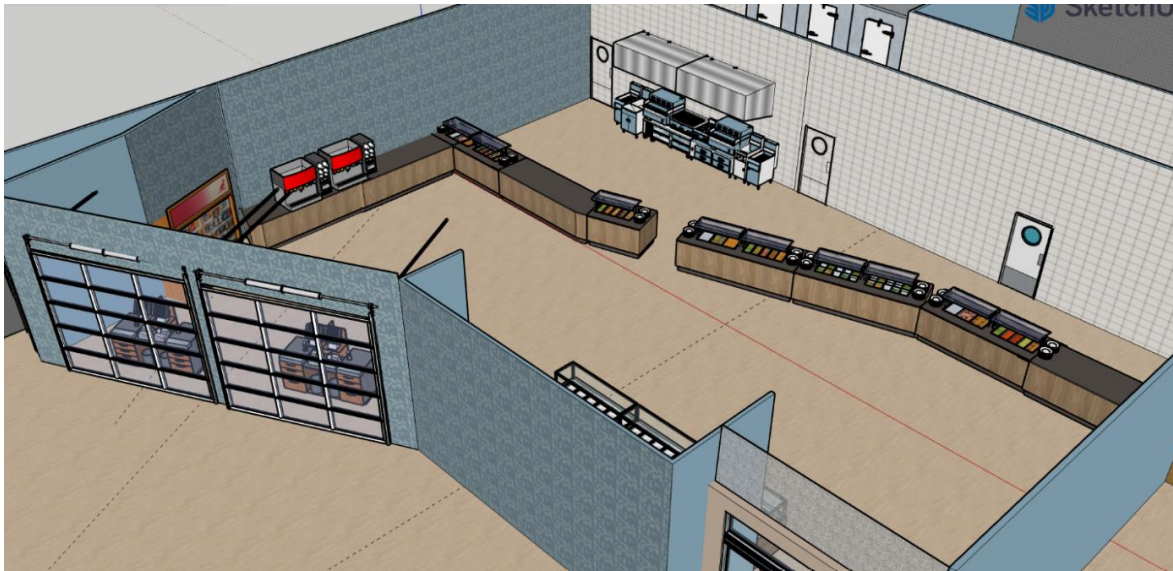
Anchoring the first floor will be the food court with multiple food concepts to serve a variety of options (see Figure 14 below, Figure 15 on page 63 and Figure 16 on page 63).

Concept recognition will be needed as it is an expectation of today's students, who can be very brand loyal. To be successful and bring students into the facility meal plans for campus need to be utilized in the union. While a dining hall outside the student union is feasible for the campus, students will want to be able to utilize dining dollars within the concepts of the student union.



**Figure 14**

*Food Court entrance*



**Figure 15**

*Overview of conceptual Food Court*



**Figure 16**

*Exit of Food Court*

*Note.* Large garage doors that access the space provide an open feel while allowing for security of space.



Branded concepts, such as Raising Cane’s, Chick-fil-A, Qdoba, or Chipotle, will be the anchor concepts of the food court. Other food options to be offered include a salad bar with subs and wrap options, burgers, Asian/Chinese cuisine, and grab-and-go items. This space needs to be flexible to rotate dining concepts quickly and regularly to stay up on trends that students desire. Keeping the dining concepts fresh will continue to draw students, as well as faculty and staff.

### **Food Service – Coffee Shop**

A staple in most student unions on college campuses is the ability to get caffeine. A coffee shop will meet that need for students, faculty, and staff as well as visitors to campus (see Figure 17 below). Nationally branded concepts will be employed in a variety of areas. National brands including Starbucks, Einstein Bagel, or Dunkin Donuts will serve as a standalone coffee and food establishment while sharing a space with a juice and smoothie bar that would be a self-branded concept (see Figure 18 on page 65).



**Figure 17**

*Coffee and Juice Bar Entrance*

*Note.* Large garage door entrance provides an open feel while allowing for security of space.



**Figure 18**

*Coffee Shop Counter*

To enhance the coffee shop offerings, it will be complimented by a juice bar in the same area (see Figure 19 on page 66). The juice bar will serve a variety of healthy options including, juices, smoothies, bubble tea, and snacks. This will meet the needs of a providing quick and healthy options for students with a limited timeframe to grab food. Staff will be cross trained in both areas.

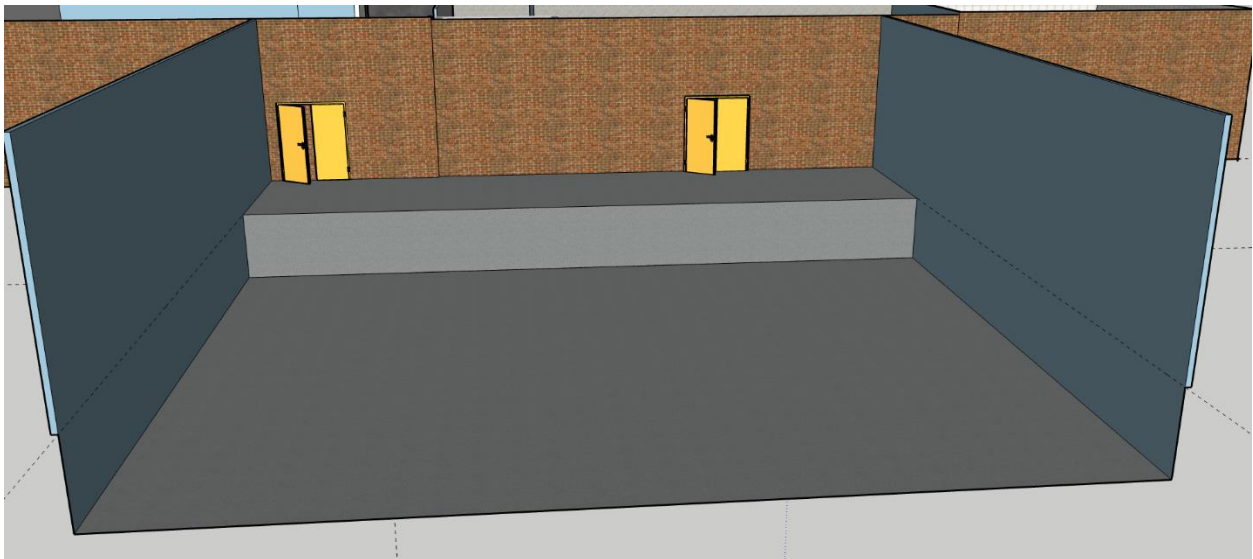
**Loading Dock**

With the multitude of amenities offered at the student union, a large loading dock is needed to meet the daily demands of deliveries (see Figure 20 on page 66). A covered loading dock will allow for deliveries outside of the elements. The dock will have the ability for two or three trucks to be delivering simultaneously and will load into the back of the house for food service, the bookstore, and the facility. Also, in the dock space will be the large trash and recycling receptacles which allows for easy access for all services to recycle and dispose of trash.



**Figure 19**

*Juice Bar*



**Figure 20**

*Loading Dock*

*Note.* Entrances into two areas of the facility allows for multiple deliveries at the same time.

## Bookstore

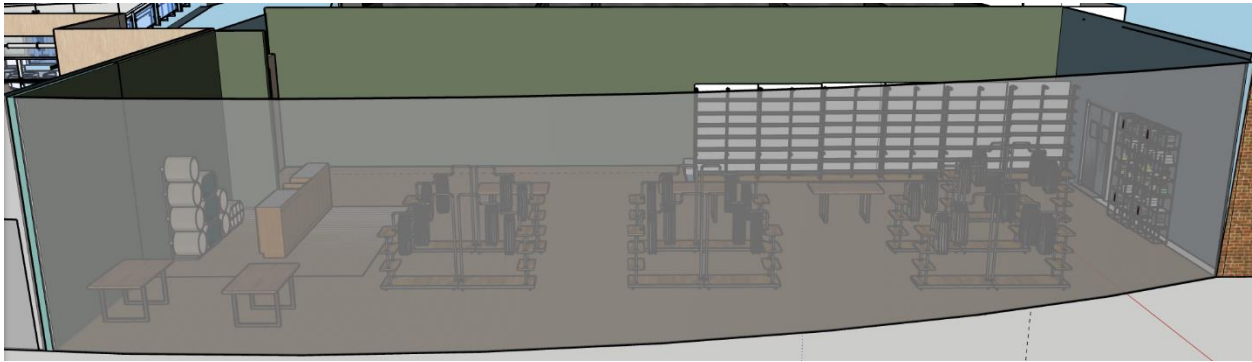
A key service provided to students in the union will be the University Bookstore (see Figure 21 below and Figure 22 on page 68). This will be a space contracted out to a national company who specializes in the offerings of text and apparel. Companies that will be sought after include Follett and Barnes and Noble. The bookstore needs to be a space that incorporates textbook and e-book sales and rentals, general books, supplies, apparel, gifts, convenience items, and technology. The space needs to be inviting while able to be secure.

By dividing the bookstore between two floors it allows the staff the ability to close off the textbook area when it is not a busy time. As textbooks are only a big draw at the beginning of the semester and end of the semester for returns, the opportunity to keep that area separated allows for reduced staffing, energy efficiencies, and reduction in theft. Other opportunities to utilize the lower level of the bookstore would be during graduation for the disbursement of cap and gowns.



**Figure 21**

*Bookstore Overview*



**Figure 22**

*Bookstore Through Windows*

### **ID Card Office**

A launching point for one's college career is receiving their ID Card. As technology advances there is a likelihood the ID card would become a digital ID card, but there will always be a need for a physical presence on campus for the ID office. The space does not need to be large to accommodate this service. Efficiencies in this area will include online picture submission, digital cards and badges, and interfacing with campus IT and other technologies.

For the ID card office to continue to serve campus, it is important that the ID card is the main form of identification for students across campus. The ID card should be used for access to areas such as the library, dining services, library services, recreation facilities, health services, mass transit services, athletic events, as well as used for classroom identification for lab access or testing. Providing this service within the student union epitomizes the union as the hub of campus life.

### **FedEx/UPS Lockers**

A small space where a set of various sized lockers for packages will be available for patron to utilize for package delivery (see Figure 23 on page 69). The growing reliance on mail

order items along with the inability to secure packages at one's home has increased the demand for such services. With easy access right inside a set of doors, students, faculty, staff, and the community can safely retrieve their packages from the lockers. These lockers will be maintained by the provider.



**Figure 23**

*FedEx/UPS Lockers*

*Note.* Lockers provide students, faculty, and staff a safe location for package delivery located directly inside a set of outside doors.

**Automated Teller Machines (ATMs)**

With a small footprint, ATMs can provide the majority of banking needs that the campus population has today (see Figure 24 on page 70). A variety of ATMs representing banks both regionally and nationally can provide banking solutions while not taking up a significant amount of square footage.



**Figure 24**

*ATMs*

*Note.* Various local and national banks can provide ATMs that can be placed throughout the building.

**Second Floor**

The second floor will be the primary meeting area for campus (see Figure 25 on page 71). With the ballroom and multiple meeting spaces, the second floor will play host to a variety of meetings, events, and conferences. To support these meetings and large events, a portion of the footprint is dedicated to storage and support services including a catering kitchen. It will also serve as the hub for all student organizations as a large suite with multiple cubicles will allow student groups to have space to do their organizations work.

**Ballrooms**

To ensure the ability to host a variety of events for the campus, community, and region that the University is part of, there must be a reasonably sized ballroom to hold events in a magnitude of formats from formal dining events to auditorium style lecture events (see Figure 26 on page 72 and Figure 27 on page 72). The large, rectangular space must have the ability to be split into smaller spaces to accommodate conferences or multiple groups at the same time. Table

1 (page 73) shows the square footage and capacity of each space as well as the combined space for multiple room set-ups. Having the ability to host small to large scale events provides a revenue stream for the student union to offset the demand on student fees.



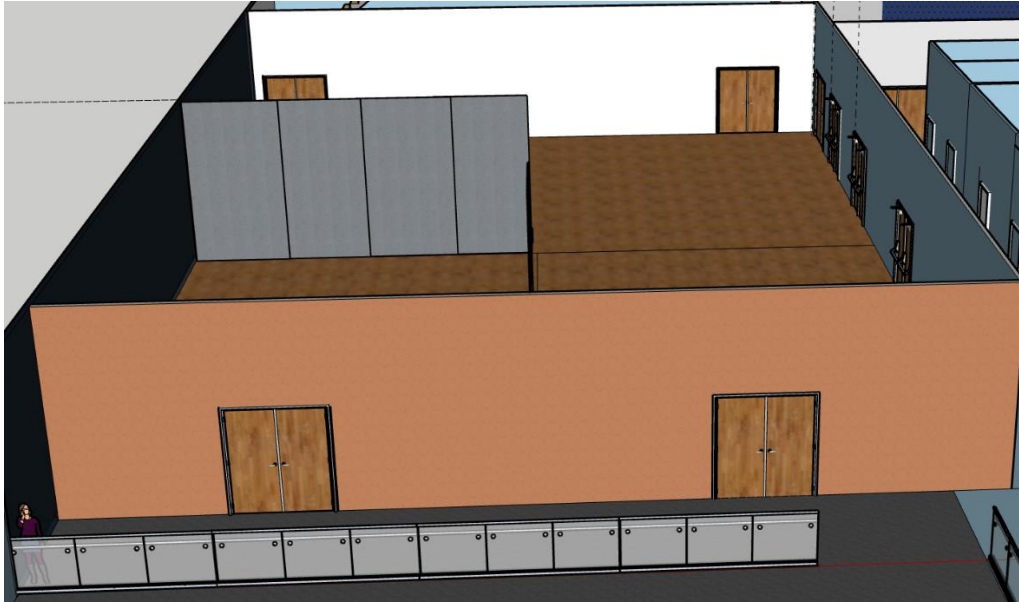
**Figure 25**

*Second Floor Overview*

Divider walls must be soundproof to allow events to happen next to each other simultaneously. Flexible space is a necessity in this space. Audio visual needs must be able to accommodate hybrid events when people are in person and remote. High quality cameras, projectors, with a sound board able to manage the multiple needs. Flooring will be a durable hard wood surface to make cleaning easy yet have an elevated feel for nice events. Acoustics in the

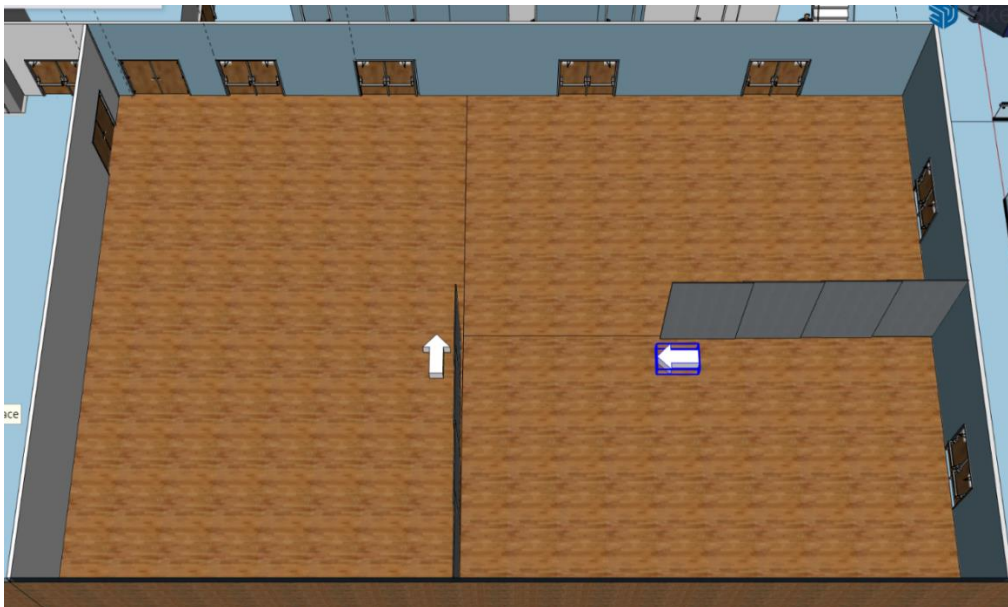


space will be important for the space as a whole and when divided.



**Figure 26**

*Ballroom Entrance*



**Figure 27**

*Ballrooms*

**Table 1***Ballrooms Square Footage and Capacity*

<b>Room</b>	<b>Square Footage</b>	<b>Maximum Capacity</b>	<b>Conference</b>	<b>Auditorium</b>	<b>Classroom</b>	<b>Banquet</b>
Ballroom one	1,500	250	50	250	107	166
Ballroom two	1,500	250	50	250	107	166
Ballroom three	2,400	400	80	400	171	266
Ballrooms	5,400	900	180	900	278	598

**Registered Student Organizations Suite**

Student organizations play an important role in the development of student leaders on our campus while providing students the opportunity to develop organizations with common interests. To support the student organizations, a suite of open offices will allow the groups to have their own space to do the business of their organization, collaborate with other organizations, hold meetings, and engage with other students (see Figure 28 on page 74). The suite will house support staff who can assist the organizations in financial matters, scheduling spaces, event planning, travel, and more. In addition to offices, there will be storage for the organizations to keep the supplies and materials. Lockers in this area will allow them to keep their items secure and accessible for their membership.

**Catering Kitchen**

To support the food service to the ballrooms and meeting rooms, a 2,000-square-foot kitchen and storage space will be in the back corner of this floor (see Figure 29 on page 75). The service kitchen will have access to the service elevator as well as direct access to the ballrooms. This space will allow for food service staff to have ample room to provide service to all spaces.

Storage will be needed for food, service ware, catering equipment, and alcohol. A small office will also be located in the space for the dining staff.



**Figure 28**

*Registered Student Organization Suite*

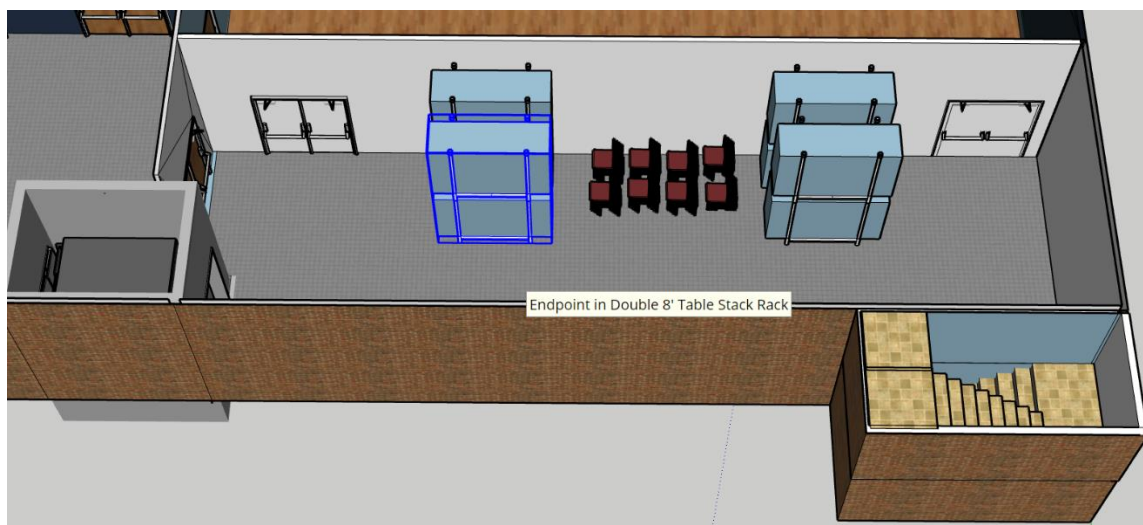


**Figure 29**

*Catering Kitchen*

**Storage and Back of House**

A generous storage room will be located on the back side of the ballroom (see Figure 30 on page 76). This will also serve as the back of house and green room area for large events. The area will provide ample space to store chairs, tables, linens, audio-visual equipment and other equipment for the ballrooms and meeting rooms. With access to the service elevator and stairs, custodial, maintenance, and catering staff will have access to storage and the back of the ballrooms and the catering kitchen.



**Figure 30**

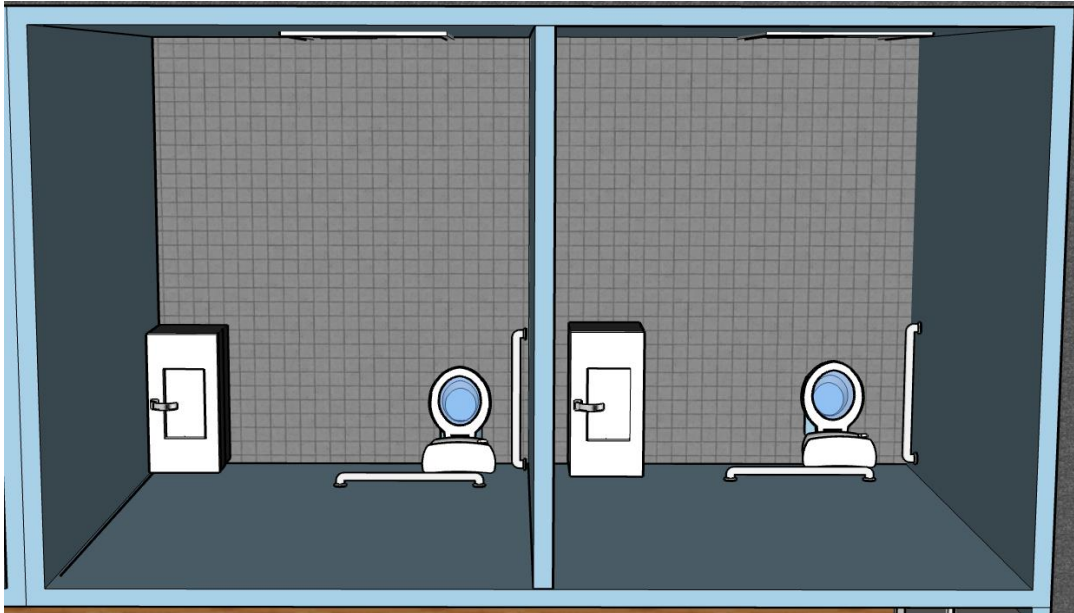
*Storage and Back of House*

### **Gender Neutral and Family Restrooms**

Gender neutral and family restrooms are a necessity of today and must be available in the facility (see Figure 31 on page 77). By centrally locating these restrooms near the main restrooms, it will allow for easy access while still providing a level of privacy for the users. These restrooms provide individuals with privacy and families more room. A changing station will be provided in these restrooms for parents with babies.

### **Third Floor**

The third floor will serve as the hub of student life with several offices to support students, meeting spaces, and open space for students to have meetups without needing a reservation (see Figure 32 on page 77). A series of smaller meeting rooms that can be combined into one larger room will meet the varying needs of student groups for meetings. There will also be opportunities for students to have impromptu or unscheduled meetings in the smaller workstations provided throughout the large lounge space.



**Figure 31**

*Gender Neutral and Family Restrooms*



**Figure 32**

*Third Floor Overview*

## **Student Engagement and Student Government Offices**

As the student union serves as the hub of campus life, students should have the opportunities easily accessible for engagement. Creating an environment where students find the support necessary to do the business of their student organizations while also just being with their friends is one of the core concepts of the student union. Student offices for areas such as undergraduate and graduate student governments, student programming council, fraternity and sorority life, service learning and volunteerism, non-traditional and transfer student services, and student employment will all have space in the facility in a centralized office. Student offices and gathering spaces for student organizations creates energy throughout the facility.

The 2,800-square-foot Engagement Suite will provide offices for the full-time student engagement staff along with the student governments for undergraduate and graduate students (see Figure 33 on page 79). These offices and the staff will provide multiple engagement opportunities that enable the students to gain valuable leadership experiences, be involved in the campus and community, and find their passion for projects outside of and within their major area of study.

## **Administration Offices**

Including the offices listed with student engagement and the ID office, there will be a need for additional offices to be housed within the student union. The administration of the facility will need space to house the support staff needed to maintain the facility. The administration office will be 1,554-square-foot and provide offices for the Director, accounting, audio visual, scheduling, and facility operation staffs (see Figure 34 on page 80). It will also have a small conference room for use by the staff for smaller meetings. A copy and supply room will be the center of the space and will house all the support materials needed for the daily

operations of the facility.



**Figure 33**

*Student Engagement and Student Government Office Suite*





**Figure 34**

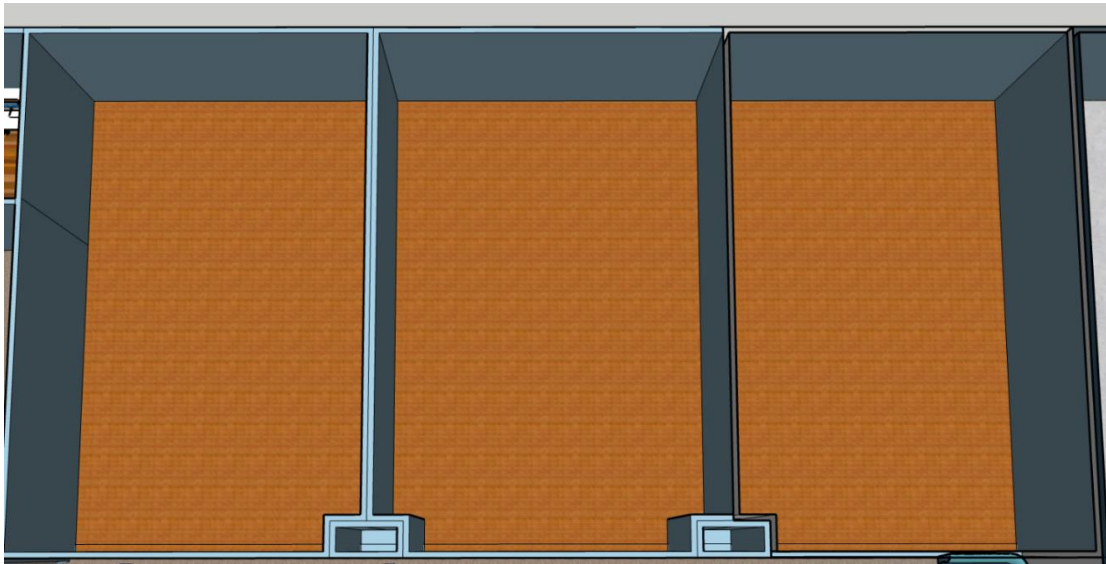
*Administration Office Suite*

**Meeting Spaces**

Seven meeting spaces in variety of sizes will be provided to meet the various meeting and

event needs (see Figure 35 below and Figure 36 on page 82). Rooms will have the capacity to seat from 15 to 200 people in a variety of set-up options including auditorium or banquet style (see Table 2 on page 83). Some rooms will have the ability to expand to double the size of the room.

Each room will be fully equipped with media and audio-visual technology. Each room will have a projector and connections for computers. Cameras will be mounted in each room to assist with hybrid meetings. Patrons will have the ability to stream their meetings online through the camera.



**Figure 35**

*Meeting Rooms*

*Note.* Meeting rooms 1, 2, and 3, can be used individually as shown or as one space.



**Figure 36**

*Meeting Rooms*

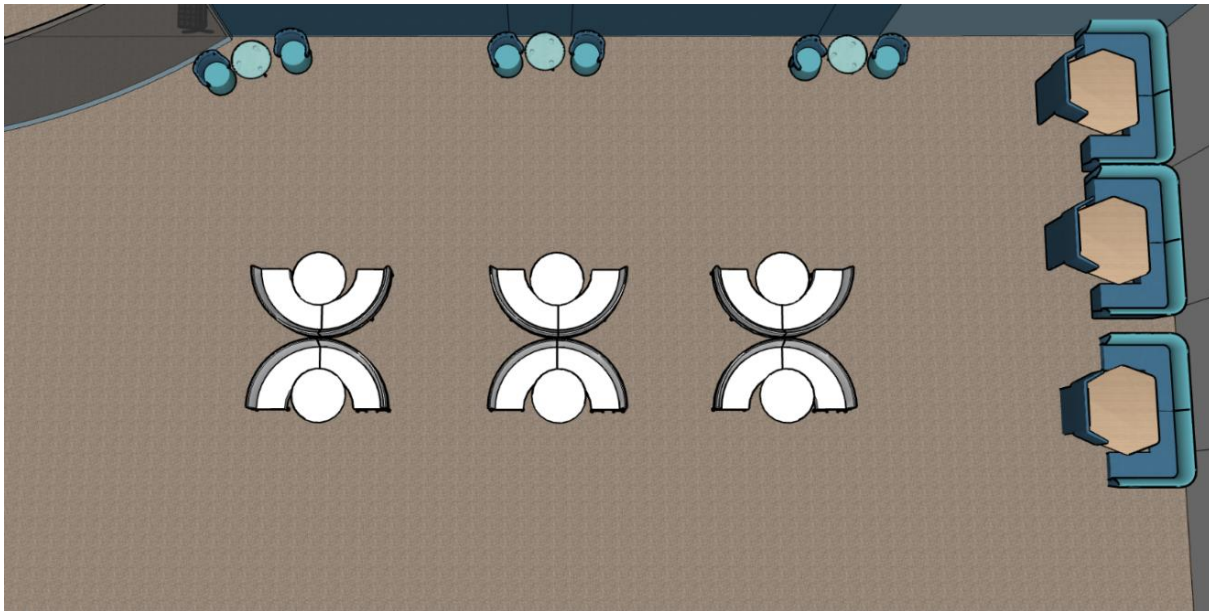
*Note.* Meeting rooms 4 and 5.

**Table 2***Meeting Room Square Footage and Capacities*

Room Type	Square Footage	Max Capacity	Conference	Auditorium	Classroom	Banquet
Conference Room	326 sq ft	15	15	N/A	N/A	N/A
Room 1 - expandable with rooms 1 and 3	600 sq ft	100	20	100	42	66
Room 2 - expandable with rooms 2 and 3	600 sq ft	100	20	100	42	66
Room 3 - expandable with rooms 1 and 2	600 sq ft	100	20	100	42	66
Rooms 1,2, and 3	1,800 sq ft	300	60	300	126	200
Room 4	1,260 sq ft	90	42	210	90	140
Room 5	1,460 sq ft	240	48	240	100	160
Room 6	1,200 sq ft	200	40	200	85	133
Room 5 and 6	2,660	440	88	440	185	293

**Workstations**

Open workstations in the lounge area will provide students the ability to connect their computers to televisions mounted on the walls (see Figure 37 on page 84). This will offer space for classmates, student organizations, or small groups to meet and work on projects in a semi-private space while still being able to be in a social environment while having access to food. These open cubicles will be available on a first come, first serve basis for patrons. The opportunity for open workstations provides students with opportunities to work together while not having to worry about reserving a room.

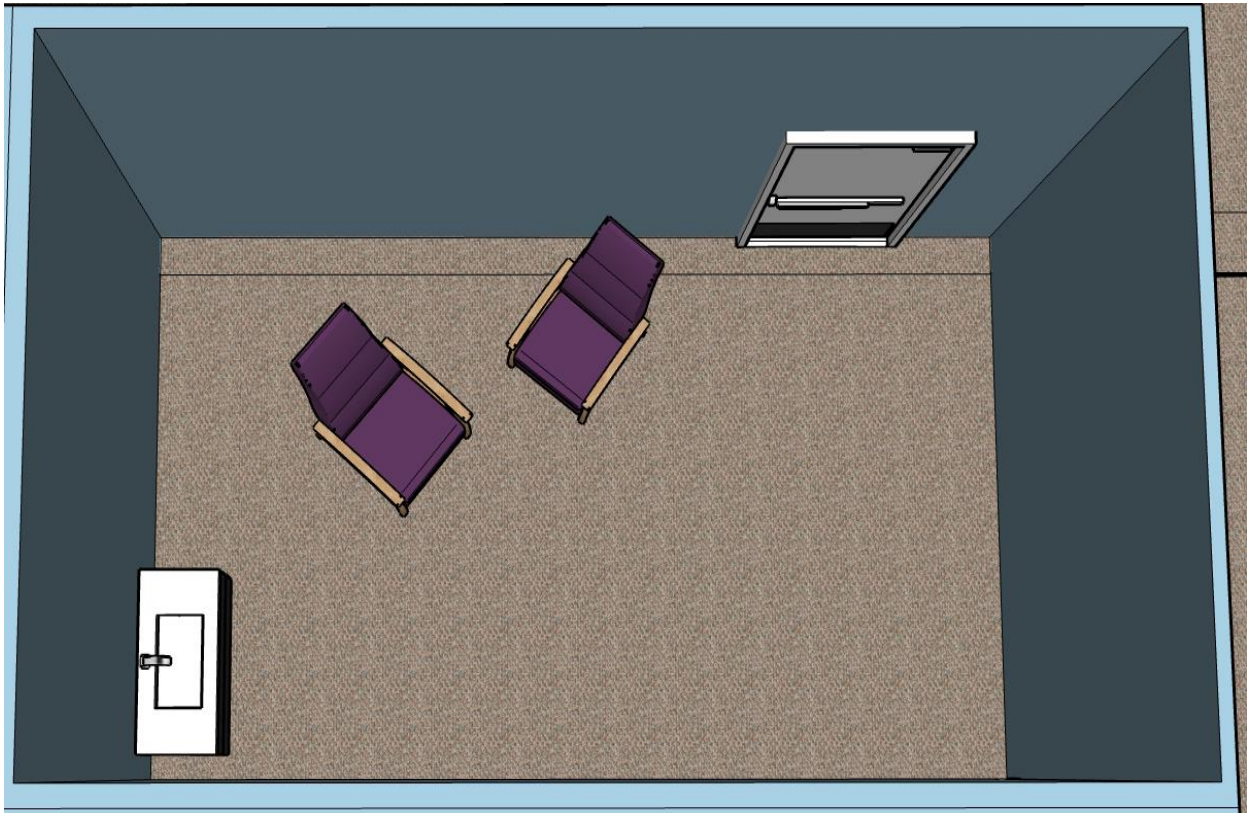


**Figure 37**

*Open Lounge with Workstations*

### **Parent's Room/Lactation Space**

According to the U.S. Department of Labor (n.d.), the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act requires employers to provide a location, other than a bathroom, that is isolated from view and free from interference from coworkers and the public, for an employee to express breast milk. A 132-square-foot space will be offered for mothers to utilize for nursing and other childcare related needs of parents (see Figure 38 on page 85). The space is in a private yet accessible location for employees and patrons of the facility. The space will include a sink, power, comfortable furniture, and changing table. Access to the space will be on a first come, first serve basis with a lock showing if the space is vacant or occupied.



**Figure 38**

*Parent Room and Lactation Space*

#### **Fourth Floor**

#### **Mechanical Rooms**

Space will be needed for the air handlers, electrical, fire protection and sprinkler systems, elevator mechanical room, and other necessary mechanical needs of the facility (see Figure 39 on page 86). While not the area one thinks of when thinking of any building, this space is vital to the overall health of the building. When events such as the recent pandemic caused building managers to look at air intake and turnover, it is important that the mechanical support of the facility for heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) is extremely important to the daily operations.

High quality, efficient air handlers will be installed to manage the building in zones. Proper ventilation allows for the air to be cycled through a filtration system within the air handlers eliminating pollutants that can cause illness. After the recent pandemic, air quality in facilities will be an area of higher importance than it was in the past.



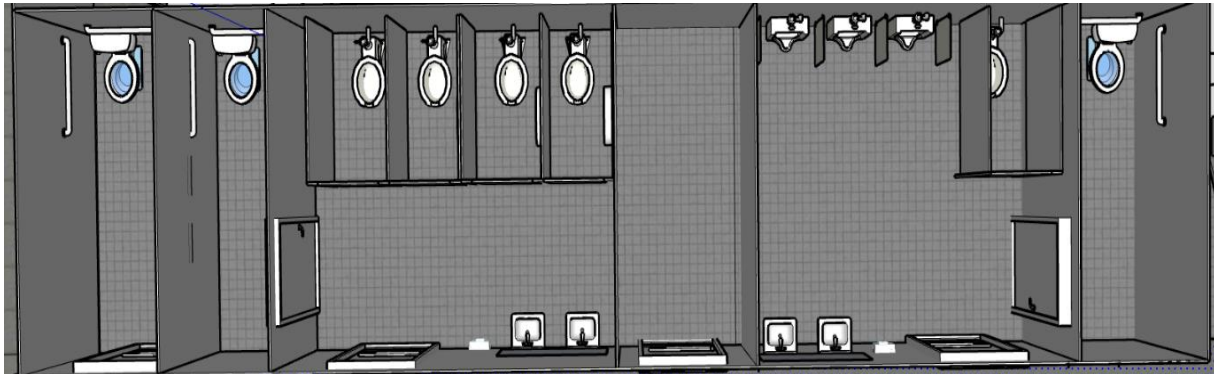
**Figure 39**

*Fourth Floor Overview with Mechanical Equipment*

## Spaces Available Throughout the Facility

### Restrooms

Restroom facilities must be placed throughout the facility to meet the traffic patterns for the facility (see Figure 40 below). To increase the efficiencies in the building, the main restrooms on the floors from the basement to the third floor will be stacked upon each other. This will allow for the plumbing to be centralized and easier to maintain. By stacking the restrooms through the building, it will also provide patrons with knowledge and easy access to restrooms on all floors.



**Figure 40**

### *Restrooms*

*Note.* Between the restrooms is a water closet that will allow maintenance staff access to the plumbing.

### Lounges

Another lounge space with communal tables or the ability to create a larger table from smaller tables will be provided on the first floor where students are more likely to gather for socialization. An open concept study lounge with the ability to create small private spaces for individual study will be in a quieter section of the building. Overall, providing ample space for



students to hang out and enjoy their time is one of the main reasons the student union is called the living room of campus.

### **Storage, elevators, and maintenance space**

Every floor will need to have significant storage for tables, chairs, linens, AV equipment, cleaning equipment, and so on. Every floor will have maintenance space with sinks and necessary cleaning products. The usual conversation with most union staff is that there is never enough storage. There will be access to all floors with a passenger elevator as well as a back of house service elevator. Two elevators are necessary due to the number of floors in the building. The service elevator will allow for the catering and maintenance to move food and equipment necessary for operations outside of the public eye, while a commercial passenger elevator will provide access for the public and meet ADA compliance.

The service elevator will need to be a minimum of six feet wide by ten feet deep with a weight capacity of 4,500 pounds (Artisan Elevators, n.d.). The commercial passenger elevator which will be used to primarily move people from floor to floor will need to be six feet eight inches wide and five feet five inches deep, with a weight capacity of 3,500 pounds (Artisan Elevators, n.d.). Having the capacity to carry a significant amount of weight is important in both elevators to ensure the operations and maintenance of the building as well as to be able to get items to the ballrooms for events.

### **Building Mechanical Systems**

For the health and safety of all patrons, the building mechanical systems are a vital component of the facility. Systems that will be located throughout include HVAC, fire protection including a full sprinkler system and smoke detection, security system utilizing cameras strategically placed throughout the building, waste and recycling receptacles, and other

environmental health and safety measures such as fire extinguishers, fire pulls, and a warning system through speakers and strobes.

Not to forget the exterior of the building, the façade of the building will be a combination of brick and glass to match the rest of campus. Windows will be treated with sun control window tinting for energy efficiency and light harvesting will occur when and where possible. The roof will have the appropriate structures in place to accommodate solar panels. It is important that the building be as environmentally friendly as possible and have LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification as defined by the U.S. Green Building Council.

### **Technology**

Students today are connected more than ever and having state of the art technology will make the facility a destination for them. Ensuring that the facility is enabled with the latest technology that can also be enhanced in the future as trends and needs change is important in meeting the student's needs. Technology covers a broad range of needs and services such as security and card access, cameras, IT infrastructure such as wireless internet access, telephone systems, digital signage, wayfinding, audio visual (AV) equipment, and centralized clock systems.

Providing as safe and secure facility is a priority. Connecting to the University's security system that can be monitored by the Department of Public Safety will provide protection throughout the facility. While not all areas will not be able to be covered with cameras, by strategically placing the cameras, it will provide efficient coverage to ensure no one can leave the facility without being seen on a camera. Card access to various areas can also provide enhanced security.

To meet the growing demand for mobile connectivity, wireless connectivity will be

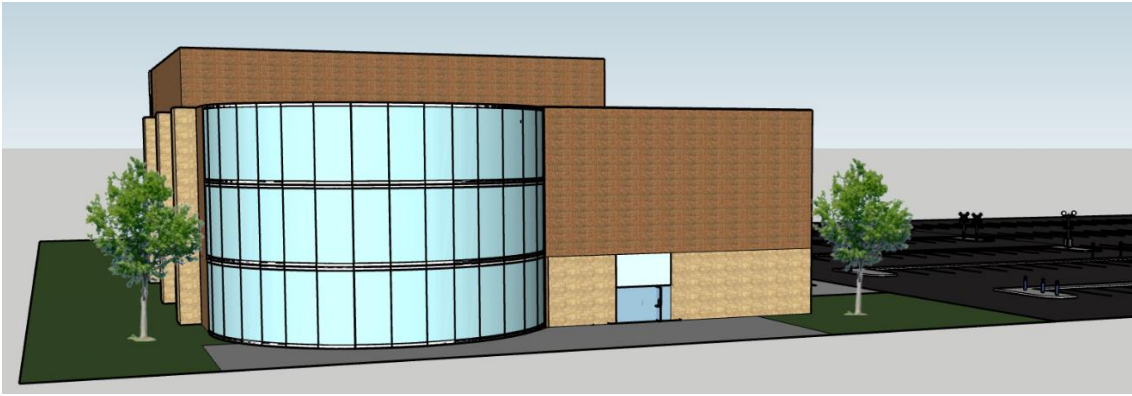
strong throughout the entire facility. Power sources to support the various technology will also be prevalent throughout with a variety of fixtures to meet the changing electrical needs or technology. Access points for wireless will be strategically placed to ensure that the facility has full wireless coverage including the back of house areas. All aspects of the building will rely on technology as the air handlers to the kitchen equipment can be managed through web-based programming.

### **Furniture**

The furniture throughout the facility will be easily movable, durable, and in neutral tones that match the interior colors of the spaces. The chairs need to be stackable in ballrooms yet comfortable and easy to move. A variety of tables will be needed including rounds, 8-foot, 6-foot and conferencing tables.

### **Exterior of the Building**

The exterior of the building will be brick and glass (see Figure 41 on page 91). There will be a parking lot to the side of the building with room for 100 cars and appropriate handicap accessible spots (see Figure 42 on page 91). To accommodate those wanting to grab coffee, food, or a textbook eight of the spots will be 30 minute or less parking. While not in front of the main entrance, it will be within an easy walk to the main entrance from the parking lot. Green space will be on all sides of the building to soften the concrete and brick on the exterior (see Figure 43 on page 91). The large glass window atrium will serve as a focal point of the entrance while providing lots of natural light in the main area. The other smaller glass windows will provide natural light to the bookstore, meeting spaces, and offices (see Figure 44 on page 92). The overall exterior will match the campus master plan while still feeling modern and new.



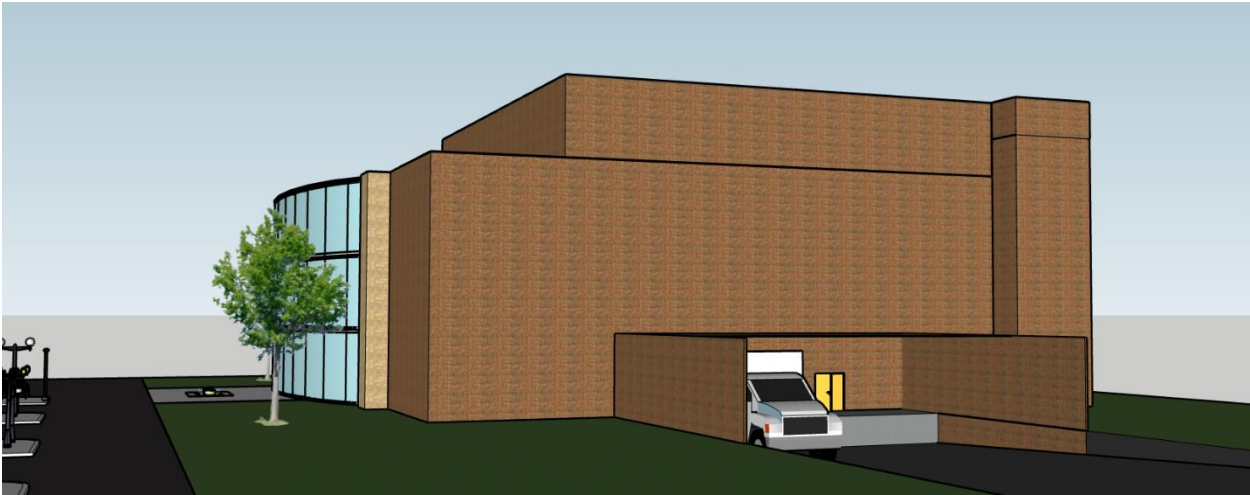
**Figure 41**  
*Exterior Main Entrance*



**Figure 42**  
*Exterior and Parking Lot*



**Figure 43**  
*Exterior Side of Building*



**Figure 44**

*Exterior Rear of Building*

### **Areas Not Included in Facility**

As the student union has developed over the year's certain entertainment options, meeting spaces, food choices, and amenities have found a home in the union. As the students' needs and desires have changed over the years, some concepts have continued to thrive in the facility while others have not survived. Each university finds itself with amenities that work on their campus while others do not and they have to decide on what will stay on their campus and what will no longer be a part of their services. After review of these amenities, I have listed some of the more common ones that will not be included in this facility.

### **Bowling/Billiards Center**

The cost to build and maintain the facility is too expensive. Bowling is not a past time utilized as much anymore for entertainment and finding qualified staff to maintain and operate the facility is difficult.

### **Craft Shop**

To properly run and maintain a craft shop there is a significant investment in building and

maintaining the facility, properly staffing trained people, equipment upkeep, and inventory.

Students of today are not currently engaged in craft opportunities and the engagement staff can utilize others on campus or in community to host similar programs when desired.

### **Faculty Lounge**

A faculty lounge is not in the true purpose of a student facility and faculty today do not utilize a space like this as they had in the past. Before technology faculty and staff had to meet in person on a much more regular basis and often utilized spaces such as a faculty lounge. Now more meetings are happening via electronic means.

### **Bank**

Banking services have gone mobile recently and the services needed to be done in person in a bank are often not services students need or desire. ATMs have become much more inclusive to meet a variety of banking needs and will be available in a centralized area for easy access and will represent a variety of banks that students are likely to utilize. It is important to have a representation of local and national banks as students from all over the world attend the university.

## **HEADING 6**

### **APPLICATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS**

This project has afforded me the opportunity to look more closely at what the needs are of the current and future students on a university campus and what they will want and need from their college experience. My main take away is that any new or renovated facility on a college campus will have to provide flexible spaces that will allow the facility to grow and change as the students change. College campuses are revolving doors for students and the student union needs to be able to change and morph to stay in tune with the students.

In my current position as Student Center Director at Southern Illinois University (SIU), this project has provided me insight for areas of improvement in the current facility I manage. The Student Center is a 60-year-old facility on campus with significant infrastructure concerns. This project will help me to explain those issues and tell the story of the SIU Student Center in the hopes of a master plan being approved for the facility. When that opportunity presents itself, I will have the knowledge gained from this project to utilize as we move through the planning process. I will have greater insight into what the concerns are for the facility, what questions that need to be asked, and how to develop a vision while engaging the campus community.

This project has opened my eyes to seeing how important the big picture is but also the importance of the finer details. Choices such as flooring surfaces, lighting fixtures, and wall treatments will have a long-term impact on the maintenance and longevity of the facility. The stacking of HVAC, plumbing, and electrical from floor to floor can provide large cost savings as well as effect long term maintenance. Placement of access points such a doors, stairwells, and elevators are critical to safety as well as building traffic patterns. Each of these details coupled together with one another will have a significant impact on the overall structure, design,

maintenance, and flow of a facility.

No matter how big or small a project like this is, if it is a renovation or a new build, having your end goals clearly defined is important. Being able to prioritize what is essential to the facility to meet the needs of the students and patrons will make the process less stressful while providing clear expectations for everyone. Taking on a renovation or new build would be no easy task. To stay on top of a project like this I would gather input from as many types of end users as possible, from initial design through the opening weeks. The culmination of a project such as this is that it is getting utilized by the students as it was intended to be used. There would be no greater satisfaction then seeing the space full of life as it is designed to be the center of campus life.

While this project had input from others, if this were to come to fruition I would ensure many more voices were heard. Designing a facility to be the epicenter of activity would require input and feedback from several campus entities. While the students would be a focal point, faculty, staff, alumni, and the community would also be valuable resources to gather insight and perspective of the facility needs. I would ensure more time was taken to listen to the end users during design phase.

It is also important to note that the project does not end the day the doors open, it is a new chapter in the story. Continuing to get input and feedback from the campus community on what they like, what works well, and what does not work well can influence the future decisions for the facility. Creating maintenance plans, replace plans, and future upgrades to technology will be important in the longevity of the facility and the services it provides.



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