STUDENT UNIONS: Trends & Issues

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programmanagers.com
Agenda

- Introductions
- Today’s Goals & Objectives
- Student Union Program Database
- Current Trends
- Discussion
Brailsford & Dunlavey
FIRM OVERVIEW

120 Employees across 10 offices
22 Years delivering campus life projects
464 Higher education clients
$35B in completed projects

440 Student housing projects
298 Student union/dining projects
240 Student recreation projects
95 Campus edge/retail projects
Goals & Objectives

- Discuss national best practices and trends related to student unions
- Highlight recent changes within the industry
- Discussion applied to SUNY / New York realities
Why Do Institutions Build?

- When Student Enrollment is Up, Schools Build to Accommodate Growth
- When Student Enrollment is Down, Schools Build to Become More Competitive
- When Student Enrollment is Stable, Schools Build to Support Their Mission, Deferred Maintenance, & Adaptive Reuse
The oldest Schools to have such a place Oxford University and its colleges

A place that will provide accommodation, meals and socialization.

The common rooms were a place of academic debate, lounging, study, reading and respite. The place to congregate.

Houston Hall at U Penn considered first student union in the U.S. - 1896
The Role of Student Unions

WHAT SUNY-SPECIFIC RESEARCH IS SAYING

Study by Leah Barrett from SUNY Brockport / St. John Fisher College (Dissertation)

Recently conducted research project using results from the 2012 SUNY Student Opinion Survey (n=15,000) found:

- Students’ sense of belonging to their institutions was directly correlated to their level of satisfaction with their institution’s union facility
- Union was more important in community building than residence halls, rec centers, or the library
- The Importance of the “Third Place”
What’s A Union?

JUST LIKE NAMES...MISSION MODELS VARY

The function of a “Union” building varies widely from campus to campus. Major variables include:

- Targeted user population(s) & utilization patterns
- Governance & budget sources
- Space allocation & amenities
- Scheduling policies, particularly instructional & external use
## Mission Models for Campus Unions – sample SUNY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intentions</th>
<th>Aspiration</th>
<th>Existing Conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mission Emphasis</strong></td>
<td>“Student Center”</td>
<td>“Conference / Retail Center”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Development/Activities</td>
<td>Generating Revenue</td>
<td>Institutional Community focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conferences and Major Events</td>
<td>Convenience—“One Stop Shopping”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policies</strong></td>
<td>Favor Students/Student Organizations</td>
<td>Favor Sales/Customers/Vendors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Favor Administrators/Donors</td>
<td>Favor Department &amp; Office Tenants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Governance</strong></td>
<td>Heavy Student Involvement</td>
<td>Finance-Oriented/Contractual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional Funding such as E&amp;G and/or Donations</td>
<td>“Middle Management” Driven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Operating Budget Sources</strong></td>
<td>Student Fees</td>
<td>Generated Profit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cost Reduction Critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>User Fees</strong></td>
<td>Low for Students High for Anyone Else</td>
<td>Set at Market Rates but Negotiable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Discounted and/or Waived for Institutional Groups &amp; “Friends”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Space Allocation</strong></td>
<td>Casual Lounge Space Important Adequate/Flexible Std. Org. Offices Flexible/Durable Finishes &amp; Furniture Computer Labs/Fitness Rooms Bulletin Boards</td>
<td>Minimal Formal Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lounge Space Used for Events High-end Event/Meeting Rooms Retail Spaces with Support Facilities Less Student Office Space</td>
<td>Formal Spaces Important Faculty Dining &amp; “Board Rooms” High $$ Signage/Artwork Alumni/Historical Artifacts Some Student Office Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Amenities</strong></td>
<td>Minimized to Reduce Cost</td>
<td>Critical but High Cost to Users Up-selling Common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Amenities Provided on Request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scheduling/Event Planning</strong></td>
<td>Teaching–oriented &amp; Flexible Last-minute Accommodations Common</td>
<td>Hotel/Conference Service Style Long-range Planning expected Contracts/Penalties Common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Responsive to Position/Influence Top-down Intervention Common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Usage Patterns</strong></td>
<td>Evenings/Weekends Heavy Late Night Common Closed Breaks/Holidays</td>
<td>Daytime &amp; Early Evenings Summer/Holiday Operation Critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Based on Institutional Calendar but Change with Short Notice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marketing</strong></td>
<td>Informal and Student-oriented</td>
<td>Sophisticated and Formal Expensive – Part of Budgeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Admissions/Advancement Issue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Student Union as an Auxiliary

- A dedicated student fee – “for the students by the students”
  - Fee pays for operations, debt service, and reserves
- Building Run (and sometimes owned) by the Students
- Other Auxiliary Revenues
  - Dining
  - Retail
  - Conference Services
  - Bookstore
  - Mailboxes
  - Leases from Tenants
- Ability to drive operating model
## Functional Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functional Area</th>
<th>ASF</th>
<th>%-Ttl ASF</th>
<th>ASF/Stdnt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1: Food Service</td>
<td>26,084</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2: Ballroom / Meeting Rooms</td>
<td>10,846</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3: Conference/Meeting Rooms</td>
<td>10,014</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4: Bookstore</td>
<td>12,410</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 5: Additional Retail Services</td>
<td>5,047</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 6: Theater/Auditorium</td>
<td>5,172</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 7: Recreation/Entertainment</td>
<td>5,564</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 8: Lounge Space</td>
<td>7,154</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 9: Academic Related</td>
<td>2,415</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 10: Student Organizations</td>
<td>8,628</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 11: Administrative Offices</td>
<td>10,368</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 12: Multicultural Centers</td>
<td>1,875</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 13: Special/Misc. Components</td>
<td>5,983</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TotalAssignable Sq. Footage</strong></td>
<td>111,727</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Gross Sq. Footage</strong></td>
<td>170,047</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gross/Net Ratio (Grossing Factor)</strong></td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Efficiency Factor (% ASF/GSF)</strong></td>
<td>65%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Student Union Cost Database

**Comprehensive Tool for Cost Database**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>GSF</th>
<th>Total Project Cost</th>
<th>Total Project Cost/SF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana State University</td>
<td>LSU Union</td>
<td>213,402</td>
<td>$81,100,000</td>
<td>$380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma State University</td>
<td>OSU Union</td>
<td>330,000</td>
<td>$65,000,000</td>
<td>$197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon State University</td>
<td>Memorial Union</td>
<td>173,500</td>
<td>$53,000,000</td>
<td>$305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Jose State University</td>
<td>Student Union</td>
<td>140,000</td>
<td>$72,000,000</td>
<td>$514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Virginia</td>
<td>Newcomb Hall</td>
<td>165,000</td>
<td>$33,000,000</td>
<td>$200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of the District of Columbia</td>
<td>Student Center</td>
<td>96,000</td>
<td>$63,000,000</td>
<td>$656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAB</td>
<td>Hill Center</td>
<td>162,000</td>
<td>$58,000,000</td>
<td>$358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finger Lakes</td>
<td>Student Center</td>
<td>78,000</td>
<td>$35,000,000</td>
<td>$449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binghamton University</td>
<td>University Union</td>
<td>314,275</td>
<td>$20,000,000</td>
<td>$64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUNY New Paltz</td>
<td>Student Union</td>
<td>119,000</td>
<td>$11,000,000</td>
<td>$92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A **disruptive innovation** is an innovation that helps create a new market and value network and eventually disrupts an existing market and value network (over a few years or decades), displacing an earlier technology.

- Campus bookstore industry has been in flux in last decade
  - Introduction of text rentals
  - Acceptance of e-books
  - Competition of on-line retailers
  - Significant pressure to limit the cost of text books

- Amazon has captured 42% of text sales and 28% of rentals

**Avg. per student spending on text books**

![Graph showing average per student spending on text books from 2007/2008 to 2014/2015.

The graph shows the following average per student spending:

- 2007/2008: $701
- 2009/2010: $667
- 2011/2012: $655
- 2012/2013: $662
- 2013/2014: $638
- 2014/2015: $563

The line graph indicates a downward trend in average per student spending from 2007/2008 to 2014/2015.
Amazon’s on-campus stores offer Free one-day textbook shipping for and secure package pickup.

US / Campus Mail Services shifting to “parcel pick-up only” in unions… if not replaced by UPS, FedEx or other outsourced option.

Walmart–near-campus stores range from 2,000 to 6,000 sq. ft. and feature pharmacies, groceries…including meat, dairy and produce.
Less defined campus edges
Off-campus university bookstores make for strong anchors
College towns potentially incubate new business
Successful college towns consists of high-end national (30%) as well as local merchants (70%)
FOOD FOR ALL—COMPETING OPTIONS REPLACE FOOD FIGHTS
Trends & Issues

LOUNGE SPACE—SEE...BE SEEN...SEE ALL
Trends & Issues

LARGE EVENT SPACES—BRIGHTER, MORE FLEXIBLE TOO
Trends & Issues

LARGE EVENT SPACES—BRIGHTER, MORE FLEXIBLE TOO
Meeting / Conference Space

- Designed as “collaboration space” rather than for “business meetings”
- Furniture and technology must be equally—and totally—flexible
- Use as rehearsal or group study space a bonus for increasing utilization
Trends & Issues

STUDENT ORGS—SMALLER, VIRTUAL... OFFICES—BRIGHTER, FLEXIBLE
Students embrace gaming, just not dedicated game rooms:
- Trend is still away from union bowling centers
- Game room sits empty except when holding a tournament
- Game room used as an event space – student org social events, birthday parties, next to food service, etc.
Trends & Issues

“LEARNING COMMONS” REPLACING THE TRADITIONAL COMPUTER LAB

◆ More lounge…less lab
◆ Designed for collaboration / group work vs. individual usage
◆ Food embraced instead of discouraged or banned
- One Stop Shopping / Centralized Customer Service
  - Both Physically and Virtually
- Front Line Generalists
- Separation of “customer facing processing” and ‘back office processing”
- Do not need to be co-located
Trends & Issues
CULTURAL CENTERS
A Focus on Campus Life: What type of programming is right for your campus?

by Jeffrey D. Turner and Abbie Fider

Why does campus life programming matter?

For years, many have noticed the effects of extracurricular programs on students in college.

Tims (1998) suggest that programs are becoming more focused on academic success, student engagement, and the ability to provide meaningful learning experiences. He noted that these changes can result in a wide range of student outcomes, including increased academic success and better overall student engagement.

Tims, however, observed that these changes can be challenging for institutions, particularly those with limited resources. It is important to consider the potential benefits and drawbacks of different types of campus life programming.

The key to successful planning

A successful campus life program should be designed to meet the needs of students, staff, and faculty. By understanding the unique needs of each group, institutions can develop programs that are tailored to their specific needs. This can involve creating a variety of programs and services, such as club activities, sports teams, and community service opportunities.

In summary, campus life programming is essential for creating a welcoming and engaging environment for students. By designing programs that meet the needs of students, staff, and faculty, institutions can create a positive and supportive campus culture.

References:


By Paul K. Bells & Kaith B. Bell

Trends and Benchmarking Data for the Modern University

by Jeffrey D. Turner, Abbie Fider, & Baitell

Colleges and universities have a distinct opportunity to help ensure successful outcomes for all students. Although each college is different, progressive student life programs have identified a number of successful models that can be replicated across different institutions. The following are some examples of successful models:

1. Creating a welcoming and inclusive environment

2. Providing opportunities for leadership and engagement

3. Fostering a sense of community

4. Promoting academic success

5. Supporting mental health and well-being

By learning from these successful models, institutions can create programs and services that meet the unique needs of their students, staff, and faculty.

References:


By Jeffrey D. Turner, Abbie Fider, & Baitell

Higher Education’s Auxiliary Realities

by Jeffrey D. Turner, Senior Vice President

While Moody’s upgraded the higher education sector in the summer of 2018, colleges and universities are still adapting to systematic changes within their auxiliary structures. Board level pressure to keep costs down and limited enrollment increases are making schools focus on every dollar spent. As national leaders in the higher education sector, we’ve identified the following top five operational issues facing housing, union, recreation and other auxiliary departments:

1. Continuing to do more with less. Much has already been written about one of higher education’s “new normal,” and which is being impacted with less.

2. More money going into the general fund.

3. More administrative leads on campus.

4. More pressure on the housing department to keep costs down.

5. More pressure on recreation departments to keep costs down.

By Jeffrey D. Turner, Abbie Fider, & Baitell

The Community Builder

Brailsford & Dunlevy Higher Education Industry Insights & Solutions

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Upcoming Conferences

We look forward to seeing you at the following conferences:

RECO Annual Conference February 23-24, 2016 Raleigh, NC

The PS Conference March 7-8, 2016 Dallas, TX

NASPA Annual Conference March 13-16, 2016 Indianapolis, IN

ACA Annual Conference March 20-24, 2016 New Orleans, LA

BRSAS Annual Conference
TO FORM A MORE PERFECT UNION...

BY SIMPSON

How might our union and university better serve our campus community? This is a question we often ask, but might not fully explore. However, at the beginning of the 2010-11 academic year, Associated Students at the University of California—Los Angeles (ASUCLA) raised the question. While recognizing that ASUCLA represents students and provides the basic services of student life, there was a general concern that our union services were not meeting the needs of the entire campus community.

Decentralization: Mini-, Satellite, and Mixed-Use Unions on Today's Campuses

By Christina C. Luo

On many of today's campuses, the physical arrangement of the union has evolved from a single building that serves as the central focal point for provision of union services for the entire campus community. Reasons for this evolution vary, but can include a large campus size or a campus made up of geographically separate components, which makes serving them from one location difficult. Alternatively, it may result from a union building that cannot be expanded due to historic or site limitations. Additionally, other campus departments increasingly are developing their own social areas to strengthen internal identity and community. And finally, factors may include pragmatic financial or political considerations that result in dispersed development.

 Despite these phenomena, campuses are coping by introducing new organizational models, service agreements, and pragmatic communication, including the development of "unions on wheels" that provide a range of union services to students in a stand-alone facility. These "mini-unions" are buildings where a major group of union functions are collected but space is shared with another primary function.

TRENDS: How demographics, technology, and sustainability are shaping future college unions

By David Hartnell, Catherine Darley, John Cook, & Bairy Porter

The world is becoming more connected. Physical barriers have been broken, and a global community has emerged. A whole generation of students is linked to one another through social networking websites such as Facebook and MySpace. Now, more than ever, there is a need to create a local, live community on campus where students meet face to face.

The trends we are seeing today are only just the beginning of what is ahead. Challenged to maintain both academic and social interests, the college union is perfectly poised to provide a place for curricular learning. As globalization takes hold on campus, three key factors will shape the college union of the future: changing demographics, technology, and sustainability.
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