



PROPOSED
NEW
STUDENT
BUILDING

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UNCONFERENCE REPORT

PREPARED BY:

Federation of Students,
University of Waterloo

AUTHORS:

Andrés Fuentes
Christina Romualdo
Elizabeth McFaul
Jesse McGinnis

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INTRODUCTION

The University of Waterloo (University) and the Federation of Students (Feds) have begun to actively investigate the need and desire for a new student building on campus. As part of this, Feds has begun an extensive consultation process to determine what undergraduate students are looking for, with regards to student space.

The proposed location is west of RCH and south of Physics, as approved by The Board of Governors on April 5, 2011.

The cost of the building is expected to be divided between undergraduates, graduates, and the University. Cost distributions will be dependent on what types of space are included, and will be determined through negotiations between the University, Feds, and the Graduate Students Association.

PROPOSED TIMELINE FOR THE NEW STUDENT BUILDING

All stages are dependent on student opinion and approval. Students will guide the entire process.

Phase 1 – Data Collection and Proposal Creation, June – July:

1. Quantitative and qualitative data collected through focus groups, a survey, and other consultation methods.
2. A draft proposal and two town halls the week of the July 23rd.
3. The completed proposal is expected to go to Students' Council on July 29th for their approval.

Phase 2 – Negotiations and Discussion, August – September:

1. Utilizing the Students' Council proposal, the Student Building Negotiating Team (SBNT) will negotiate, with the University administration, on behalf of students.
2. Subsequent phases are dependent on a signed preliminary agreement between students and the University.

Phase 3 – Secondary Consultations, October – November:

- Feds, the University, and the Graduate Students Association will refine the proposal, based on the signed preliminary agreement, and consultations with students on campus during the Fall term.

Phase 4 – Feds' Facilitated Referendum, February 2013:

- The expected date for a Feds' facilitated referendum is February 2013, aligned with the annual Feds election. This referendum will not be held if the proposed agreement is not meeting student needs.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

Consultations occurred throughout the month of July 2012. The consultation process encouraged undergraduate students to voice their opinions on the various topics surrounding the potential new building proposal, along with any concerns around student space and student services in general. The methods were:

- **Focus Groups:** small group discussions for all undergraduate students, with a few special sessions for event planners.

- **Unconference:** a participant-driven conference on Grad House Green, where topics of discussion about the building were decided by students.
- **Build Your Own Building:** participants at the focus groups and the unconference were provided with an exercise to complete about space allocation in their ideal student building.
- **Online Survey:** a 15-20 minute survey sent to all undergraduate students and linked on the Feds website, covering student opinions on a wide variety of topics relating to student space and the new building.
- **Town Halls:** a large-scale, question and response style, informal public meeting where students will have an opportunity to provide feedback and guide our new student building proposal.

USE OF DATA

The data was compiled and analyzed by the SBCC and released in the form of several reports:

- Proposed New Student Building: Focus Group Report
- Proposed New Student Building: Unconference Report
- Proposed New Student Building: Build Your Own Building Report
- Proposed New Student Building: Survey Report
- 2010 Services Survey Report
- Feds Study Space Report

These reports are based on the direct expressions and opinions of the consultation participants. As such, we cannot guarantee the accuracy of some of the statements received during the consultations. Data for the first four reports was generated from the recent consultations. The Study Space Survey Report and the 2010 Student Service Building Survey Report were based on previous reports by Feds. This data was used to create the initial proposal, and will drive the SBNT negotiation between the University, Feds, and the Graduate Student Association.

BACKGROUND

An unconference is a large-scale, participant-driven event. The unconference gave students a highly interactive, engaging, and social medium to express their opinions. It was our primary large-scale in-person consultation for the new building, which was designed to generate new ideas and get less directed feedback through a participant driven discussion. The unconference provided the additional value of demonstrating student interest and concerns regarding the building to the University. University Administration were able to be actively involved in the consultation process, and listen directly to students and their concerns.

Our intent in running the unconference was to gather new ideas and record open discussion around key concepts and questions, helping us fill missing pieces of our previous consultation efforts, and work out contentious issues.

METHODOLOGY

The unconference was held Thursday, July 19th from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. in our rain location, the SLC Multi-Purpose Room. Over 40 students attended the unconference. Participants representing the University included Geoff Christou, Sean Van Koughnett, Chris Read, Bud Walker, and Dr. Sallie-Ann Keller.

The unconference was advertised through social media, posters, Imprint, and through SBCC members. All students who signed up for a focus group had the opportunity to sign up for the unconference at the same time.

When participants arrived at the unconference, they were given the opportunity to create a new session or choose what sessions they were interested in attending. Student participants were often the facilitators for many of the sessions. Throughout the event, participants were encouraged to drop in-and-out of the running sessions.

The groups were encouraged to take notes and summarize their discussions. These notes were collected by the event organizers to inform this report. We analyzed the data by going through these notes to capture the themes, opinions, and overall perspectives of the attendees.

Please note that each session outlined in this report represents the opinions of the three (3) to ten (10) attendees of that session.

DATA

SESSIONS

Session: Accountability

Discussion

Students in this session discussed the need for both transparency and accountability throughout the creation and development of the new building. Students focused on the need to ensure a transparent process, citing that you cannot have accountability without transparency. They defined transparency as complete information that is easily accessible for the average student. The group also indicated that transparency is not accountability, as accountability refers to having consequences for actions.

Students desired consensus-based decisions, as opposed to a vote, within the negotiations. Students also requested having a referendum vote for any decisions that have significant impact to large populations of students.

Fed Hall was a significant topic that raised concern, and students discussed how to prevent the actions and outcomes of Fed Hall from occurring again. Students want a strong agreement that protects student interests. They suggested including a clause around what would happen if the building was taken over by another stakeholder.

Outlying Discussion

Students in this session also mentioned the possibility of including a sit-down restaurant in the new building, but expressed concerns about this location running at a loss. They mentioned that the design of The Bombshelter Pub contributes to it running at a loss.

Results

Students are still concerned with the ongoing settlement negotiations for Fed Hall, and wish to ensure that the process for the new building is both transparent and accountable. They requested complete information that is easily accessible for the average student and a method to ensure this data is available in the future.

Session: Anticipating Future Needs

Discussion

Students expressed a desire that this building be planned with future needs in mind. They mentioned trying to meet future technological needs, specifically around power sources. Having the ability to reconfigure the space in order to adapt to changing student needs is important to these students. Students also asked about having potential space for new Feds services.

Outlying Discussion

Students in this session stressed the importance of having open space in the building, while avoiding wasteful open space, such as a multi floor atrium. Students recognized that there are services on campus that require more space, such as the Office for Persons with Disabilities. They identified that the SSO and the Registrar's Office should not be included in the building.

There was interest in a club-accessible movie theatre. Students in this group also discussed the possibility of sound-proof walls, an approved kitchen, and sleeping chambers.

Results

Students are concerned about the impact of the building on future students, as the students deciding on the fee and the elements of the building are not the students that will pay the fee. Students want to develop a space that will continue to meet their needs into the future.

Session: Architectural Design

Discussion

Students in this session focused on the architecture of the potential building. Students wanted a building that has distinct architectural elements, that are definitive of UW's identity, and innovative spirit. The location of this building was also important; they believed that this building should be a landmark, alongside the Dana Porter library, and connected to RCH. Students expressed desire for a building with lots of windows, transparent walls, and glass tables. Environmentally-friendly aspects such as a living wall, interior vegetation, and LEED platinum designation were also notable mentions. Aesthetically, students wanted a colourful building with exterior art representative of Waterloo and its faculties. Students also wanted an atrium in which to hold events.

Results

Students want a building that embodies the spirit of the University of Waterloo and its faculties. This building should be architecturally and aesthetically appealing and should represent the innovative culture of the University of Waterloo. This building should also convey an openness, have lots of natural light, and have environmentally-friendly aspects.

Session: Clubs Space

Discussion

Students in this session discussed the possibility of creating a clubs' library that could be shared by all interested clubs. Students mentioned having club offices, where clubs could hold office hours and meet new members.

Students in this session also discussed adding a prayer room. This room would need to be the size of the current multi-purpose room (MPR) in the SLC with no furniture, a washing area, and moveable sections to adjust the size of the room. This room needs to be accessible to the Muslim Students' Association on a regular basis with storage space for prayer materials.

Results

Clubs have specific space needs that they perceive as not being addressed with the space constraints on campus. Due to the varied nature of these needs, new space needs to be multi-purpose in order to accommodate a wide range of club activities.

Session: Engineering Students' Ideas

This session began with an impromptu conversation with several students from Engineering. What started off as a conversation about how to effectively communicate with Engineering

students, and under-engaged students, turned into a discussion on what should go into the building to best accommodate the busy lives of these students.

Discussion

How to engage under-engaged students: Feds should send out one mass email to students at the beginning of the term, which lists all the events that are set to run and when. Students could then opt-in to events, selecting which events they would like to receive more information about. Event organizers would then email those students closer to the date. The majority of events should also be held during the first two weeks to month of school, since that is when students have the free time to attend. Students considered integrating this system with Quest, Jobmine, or Learn, but felt that “social” events should be separated from “academic” events.

Location of building: Students were concerned that the proposed space west of RCH and south of Physics was not adequate for a new building. Students did not want to cut into the Grad House Green. However, they were receptive to the idea of building under the green space.

Connectedness: Students wanted the building connected to other buildings, either through tunnels or overpasses. Students also wanted to connect the SLC to the rest of campus, and connect the residences. Students determined that overpasses were the more cost-efficient, as they would not require additional digging into the ground.

Cross-faculty interactions: Students in this session explained that they did not spend much time with students in other Engineering programs or other faculties. Students saw this as unfortunate, since cross-faculty interaction could lead to innovative solutions and ideas. They suggested a number of ideas, such as having a Groupon deal where in order to get 50% off of your Bomber meal, you would need to have one Engineering student, one Arts student, and one Math student come in and eat lunch together. Students determined that meal times would be the best time for cross-faculty interactions. Another idea was having inter-faculty events that would encourage students in different faculty to develop a creative solution together (not courses, were working for a grade would inhibit creativity).

Centralization of services: Students were asked how much they minded waiting in long lines at the Registrar’s Office, Student Accounts and Financial Aid, and other administrative offices at the beginning of term. They were also asked whether or not these services should be centralized in order to save time. Students answered that the time spent waiting in line was fairly insignificant and did not warrant centralization of services.

Building features and services: Students had many creative ideas that would cater specifically to a very busy student:

- Sleep pods or cubbies to rent;
- Showers;
- More locker space;
- Lots of windows and natural light;
- Aquarium
- Legoland/building station
- Courtyard study room
- Rotating art installations
- Aesthetic message board
- Mall food court
- Group-work rooms

Building Pamphlets: Students realised that there were many things in buildings that they never knew existed. Students stated that they wanted lists of features in buildings so that, when they had time, they could go and explore these features.

Results

These students are interested in having features in the new building that cater to busy students who have limited time outside of class and studying. These students are focused on their studies, spending most of their time preparing for their future career. Despite their constrained schedules, these students still value cross-faculty interaction, student engagement, and relaxation. They believe that there are creative ways to incorporate these aspects into students' busy days. Students believe that while the building should be connected to other buildings, the services do not need to be centralized. Students have concerns that there is not enough space to construct a new building in the proposed location west of RCH and south of Physics.

Session: Dream Big - Features

Students in this session were encouraged to think of what features they would want, regardless of space, cost, or other limitations. This session ran twice.

Discussion

Students in this session brainstormed potential features for the building, such as:

Features for furniture and study space

- Beanbag chairs
- Logically-placed outlets
- Reclining chairs
- Laptop desk station with laptop locks
- Bookable glass cubicles for group study with whiteboards
- Integrated study service space with computer terminals, scanners, photocopiers
 - A "Digitize-your-notes" station
- Movable furniture and walls for multi-purpose use

Building Design

- Natural light
- Skylights and windows
- Automatic doors
- Gender-neutral washrooms
- Water fountains
- Reusing greywater for water in the building
- Underground mall
- Balconies or accessible roof space
 - Rooftop garden
- Green or living wall
- Student garden space
 - Farmers' market

Fun Items

- Student kitchen
 - Clubs or individual students could book it out
 - We could offer cooking classes
- Another Turnkey
- Games room
 - Televisions with gaming consoles
- Food carts in the Atrium
 - Would rotate on a regular basis
- Pool tables and foosball
- Bike repair centre
 - Vending machines with inner tubes
- Specific rooms designed for group therapy
- Nap couches or beds for sleeping

Audio-Visuals

- A/V podcasting
- Media lab
- Live music
 - Controlled by a voting system
- Projector space
- Recording studio
- Auditorium
- Library for 21st century
 - Multidisciplinary materials
- Cutting-edge technologies
 - Teleconferencing abilities
 - LCD screens
 - RFID WatCards for door control
 - Having the building interact with social media

Results

Students have a variety of needs and wants, so the new building will need to be versatile to meet this wide range of unique requirements. Given no limitations, students would want to have a building that is comfortable, cutting-edge, and convenient. If students were to create their ideal building, it would be highly innovative, dynamic, and unique.

Session: Funding

Discussion

Students felt that while certain items should be paid for by the University, they should also bear some of the financial responsibility. They were interested in the idea of sponsorship for the building in order to bring down the cost to students, but wanted good communication about the contracts and stipulations within them. Students were curious about the actual costs and when they would start paying for it.

Students expressed that space used by Food Services and University departments should be paid for by those departments. While social space should be paid for by students, opinions differed when it came to who should pay for study space. It was made clear that no classrooms should be in this building.

Students want Feds to reduce the cost to students as much as possible, including through corporate sponsorships or government funding. When discussing corporate sponsorship students expressed that they do not mind if rooms are named after companies. For corporate-

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funded rooms, when it came to usage, students agreed that they should be the primary users, but staff and external companies could use it to hold events for students. In addition that any external contract that may have a contentious issue, should go through Students' Council or an unconference. An example of this would be students not supporting certain companies. It was also mentioned that there are University naming rights policies that would need to be followed.

Students asked when they would start paying for the building. It was suggested that it would be when the building was about 80-90% completed. Students seemed hesitant that very few or no students voting for the building would be paying or using it.

Outlying Discussion

Some students wondered whether the lack of study space was a misperception caused by students not knowing where to study. They suggested creating a schedule to show what rooms were being used by classes and when they were otherwise available. Students also expressed concern that some items listed in the online survey were not worthy investments, such as slides.

Results

Students recognize that they will have to bear some of the financial responsibility for the new building. Students are interested in methods that would reduce the cost to students, such as government or corporate funding. They are open to the idea of corporate sponsorship, but expressed concerns about the stipulations for the external contracts. Students are hesitant about imposing a fee on future students.

Session: How Big is this Building?

Discussion

Students believe that the building should be "as big as it needs to be," but that it is better for the building to be built "too big, rather than too small." However, students were concerned that if the building became too large, they could have difficulty navigating and accessing certain floors. Students felt that the size of the building should reflect the size of the student population, particularly since this building is meant to be the central student hub. Students discussed the idea that certain services that are not student-focused should be on upper floors, and those services with higher traffic should be on lower floors.

Outlying Discussion

Students defined a student service as one that directly supports and interests students. It should be something that students want, need, and will use. Students believe that Feds-run services such as the Food Bank and GLOW should be moved in order to improve student access to them. The need for additional space for university services such as Counselling Services and OPD was recognized, but students stressed the importance of using this space efficiently. Students also agreed that it is worse to have existing services and space taken away, then it is to not have them at all.

Students believe that the Feds' offices should be moved to the new building in order to free up office space in the SLC for clubs space and studying. Students also recognized that not all clubs need space, but when possible, there should be shared spaces.

Moving the Bookstore to the new building was also discussed, in order to permit window displays for improved advertising. Students discussed ways to streamline the textbook-buying process, and they compared our bookstore to those found at other Universities. Students preferred the idea of having one central multi-floored retail centre as opposed to two separate

spaces for textbooks and retail products.

Students also have concerns about congestion during construction, and other inconveniences that may arise.

Results

Students believe that the building should be large enough to address the current space challenges on campus without being confusing. Students feel that the current space challenges on campus are not being addressed, and the new building should reflect the student population on campus. Students believe that services on campus should be assessed for their efficiency before moving them.

Session: Multi-Faith Prayer Rooms

Discussion

Students in this session discussed the need for prayer space for the Muslim community. Requirements included a room the size of the current MPR in the SLC with no furniture, a washing area, and moveable sections to adjust the size of the room. Additionally the SLC MPR does not allow more than three bookings a term per club, which does not accommodate for the weekly prayer meetings of the Muslim community. This room would need to be regularly accessible to the Muslim Students' Association.

Results

The Muslim community feels that their religious needs, in terms of dedicated prayer space, are not being met on campus.

Session: Overcoming Apathy

Discussion

Students expressed concerns that there was a general sentiment of apathy towards the new building. Students in the session provided a variety of reasons for attending the unconference, from free food to making sure that the building is done right. The students in this session questioned the necessity of the building. Students believed that their needs were already being met in other places. They felt that existing study space is under-utilized and had only 200 people studying in Dana Porter. These students expressed concerns that the targeted students for this building would be Arts, Science, and Engineering students due to their physical proximity. They indicated that there must be a defined need for the new building.

The students in this session believed that the average student does not trust Feds because of a lack of accountability and transparency. They included the lack of transparency in the Fed Hall situation and the lack of information and tangible results about the recent Feds fee increase (for new staff). Students would have liked to have the survey results released before the unconference.

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Students were concerned that the Student Life Centre went from being fully Feds-controlled to having a joint management board. They wondered who should have control over the new building. Students in the session felt that the current Feds exec could be promoting the building in order to fulfill their platform. However, they were elected to represent the needs of students. They were concerned that the University administration would take over study space for offices.

Students debated about what would make them approve or decline a new building.

- Not having to pay for the building would make these students more accepting.
- Offering better, cheaper food; having a new pinnacle building at Waterloo; and having more space were other reasons to approve the building.
- However, students felt that the inconvenience of the construction could be a deterrent. Speed of construction is very important, as well as having another building in the way.
- Students in this session felt that current buildings and services should be fixed before constructing another building. In particular, the SLC was not being used to its full potential.
- Students did not want new food spaces that cost too much. They cited the prices at Bomber, as well as its slow service.

Students highlighted that the issue of Fed Hall must be resolved in order to regain student trust, and that information about the building should be open and transparent.

Results

This discussion critically analysed the need for a new student building, and addressed contentious issues such as accountability and transparency, especially after the situation with Fed Hall. Students in the session were concerned about the potential inconvenience of construction, building a new building rather than improving existing services, and appropriate building management. It is important that Feds makes concerted efforts to constantly keep students up-to-date with negotiations and make sure that students concerns about convenience and the need for the building are addressed.

Session: Urban Design and Planning

Discussion

Students were interested in the design and planning of the building. They discussed connecting the building to others on campus, both above ground and through the use of a potential underground hub. Students discussed the importance of differentiating between the new building and the SLC; both buildings should have distinct purposes, and the new building should not copy the SLC in terms of service and space offerings. Students also mentioned having a building design that is sustainable, and focuses on visible multi-purpose space.

Results

Students want a sustainable and multi-purpose new building that has a unique role on campus, focusing on unmet needs in terms of space and services. It should not impede on the existing atmosphere of the SLC.

CONCLUSIONS

THE PROCESS

The design of the unconference allowed all stakeholder groups to have an effective multi-way dialogue about the new building. We found many benefits to this event, as well as many aspects that could be improved.

The event had a fantastic turnout, with over 40 attendees. The event fulfilled its objective by being truly participant-driven and allowing attendees to choose and discuss topics that they were interested in. The resulting discussions were stimulating and provided in-depth analysis of the issues and concerns of the students. This event was an excellent method to diffuse existing information about the building, and answer any questions students had, due to the bottom-up nature of the unconference and the fact that it included multiple stakeholders.

Due to the nature of an unconference, we believe that it may have been better to hold it earlier on in the consultation process to generate ideas, as opposed to having it as the conclusion to our consultations. It would have also been valuable to provide brief facilitator training for each of the students who signed up to run a session, to help them frame their upcoming discussion. In some cases strong personalities and opinionated individuals took over the discussion, preventing the entire group from sharing their opinion. This issue could have been addressed through facilitator training. In the future we would recommend having a consistent note-taking system in place, to provide us a better picture of what was actually discussed in each session. This would make this report both more accurate and thorough.

Students also presented some incorrect assumptions. This shows us that it is important that the entire process remain as transparent as possible and that Feds needs to continue to disseminate information in a manner that is accessible to students.

THE RESULTS

The unconference identified that students have varied opinions about the potential new student building. They have several points of hesitation, such as being unsure of the exact location of the building, as well as its impact on student life and other buildings on campus. Students are also concerned about the cost breakdown of the building, as well as who would be bearing the costs. Students also value a very transparent, open, and accountable process. Given that some students have preconceived notions that may not be entirely factual, ensuring constant communication and updates to students is absolutely necessary.

Students have a variety of specialized and distinct needs; the next step would be to determine a cost and space-efficient way to satisfy all of these unique needs. Ultimately, students will not accept a building that does not meet their needs or if their questions about the building or its process go unanswered.