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Miami University Hamilton
Student Government Association

The Schwarm Commons Renovations Committee

The Final Report

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Introduction

When the Student Government Association was informed of future renovations of the Swarm Commons on Miami University Hamilton's campus, a committee was formed to make recommendations regarding the project. The committee also decided to undertake the task of investigating student opinion regarding the current food service at the Harrier's Nest. The committee set out to gather student input through focus groups and surveys, and eventually proposed many recommendations based upon the data collected.

The committee would first like to thank the following professors and staff members at Miami University Hamilton for distributing surveys to their students: Dr. Andrew Webber, Ms. Kim Cain, Dr. Bob Davis, Dr. Dave Sobecki, Mrs. Jill Gauthier, and Dr. Trish Ellerson. Without their help and dedication, the committee would have missed out on valuable student insight that helped with the recommendations.

Methodology

The committee met with a focus group on October 5, 2005 that consisted of 15 students. The students were gathered together based on their activity in the commons (Example: One was eating, one was reading, one was in the television lounge, etc.). Students from the study lounge in Mosler were also included so the committee could find out why certain students may prefer one space over others on campus.

The students participated in the focus groups for approximately an hour and a half. During this time, the students filled out surveys and participated in a group discussion regarding Swarm Commons as well as the current food service at the Harrier's Nest.

Furthermore, the committee launched a Campus-Wide Survey Campaign through the assistance of participating professors. The survey consisted of seven questions regarding Swarm Commons and ten questions regarding the food service. Over 240 surveys were collected.

Findings

Surveys in the focus group consisted of both open ended questions and ratings questions. The questions that were answered with ratings adhered to the following scale: 1 represents extreme dissatisfaction and 10 represents extreme satisfaction.

The results for the focus group surveys were as follows:

1. What is your overall satisfaction with the current layout of Swarm? Answer = 7.3
2. What is your satisfaction with the amount of seating in Swarm? Answer = 7.8
3. How necessary do you feel the ping-pong tables are in Swarm? Answer = 5.6
4. How necessary is the television lounge in Swarm? Answer = 5.1
5. How satisfied are you with the amount of study areas in Swarm? Answer = 5.7
6. How satisfied are you with the effectiveness of the study areas in Swarm? Answer = 5.6
7. How satisfied are you with the jukebox in Swarm? Answer = 5.2
8. What do you feel the primary purpose of the Commons area is? Resounding Answer = Relaxation and Socialization
9. How often do you visit Swarm Commons per week? Answer = 4-5 times per week
10. If only one aspect of Swarm Commons could be changed excluding the Food Service, what would you change? Answers ranged from the following = Furniture, fix cable, add more study areas, add a pool table, make it larger, and add a computer lounge.

The focus group survey regarding the food service contained fifteen questions using the same scale as the previous survey.

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| 1. Overall Satisfaction = 8.3 | 2. Menu variety = 6.5 |
| 3. Food temperature = 8.9 | 4. Food quality = 7.8 |
| 5. Food taste = 8.1 | 6. Food price = 8.4 |
| 7. Cleanliness = 8.3 | 8. Courtesy of employees = 9.8 |
| 9. Hours of business = 4.6 | 10. Vending services = 5.8 |
11. How many meals do you eat at the Harrier's Nest per week? Answer = 3 meals
 12. Are you satisfied with the current business hours at the Harrier's Nest? 13% of those surveyed said YES, and 87% said NO.
 13. Name three new menu items you would like to see offered at the Harrier's Nest. Answers ranged from the following = Pizza, ice cream, steak, fajitas, shrimp, tacos, cake, fruit, pasta salad, lasagna, McDonalds, healthier options, vegetarian items, sub sandwiches, and milkshakes.
 14. If given the option to renew the current food services' contract or look elsewhere to another provider, what would you do? 86% of those surveyed said KEEP THE CURRENT FOOD SERVICE, whereas 14% said they would LOOK FOR ANOTHER COMPANY.

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5. What are your feelings about the vending machines on campus? Answers ranged from the following = price of soda should be lowered to one dollar, more variety, more availability, newer coffee machines.

The Campus-Wide Survey Campaign collected 240 surveys that were tabulated by the committee. The results of the Schwarm Commons component of the survey are as follows:

1. What is your overall satisfaction with the current layout of Schwarm? Answer = 6.6
2. What is your satisfaction with the amount of seating in Schwarm? Answer = 6.0
3. How necessary do you feel the ping-pong tables are in Schwarm? Answer = 6.0
4. How necessary is the television lounge in Schwarm? Answer = 5.5
5. How satisfied are you with the amount of study areas in Schwarm? Answer = 5.3
6. How satisfied are you with the effectiveness of the study areas in Schwarm? Answer = 5.2
7. How satisfied are you with the jukebox in Schwarm? Answer = 5.6

The results of the Food Service component of the survey are as follows:

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| 1. Overall Satisfaction = 7.1 | 2. Menu variety = 5.9 |
| 3. Food temperature = 7.3 | 4. Food quality = 6.3 |
| 5. Food taste = 7.1 | 6. Food price = 6.8 |
| 7. Cleanliness = 7.3 | 8. Courtesy of employees = 8.3 |
| 9. Hours of business = 5.3 | 10. Vending services = 6.9 |

Although initial reaction to these numbers may be satisfying, when translated into a report card format, the numbers aren't so flattering. Overall satisfaction, food temperature, food taste, and cleanliness all received C's. Food quality, food price, and vending services all received D's. Furthermore, hours of business and menu variety received F's. The only commendable rating was the student opinion regarding the courtesy of the employees. By looking at these surveys, the committee understands that there is plenty of room to improve for our current food service.

Furthermore, numbers regarding the Schwarm Commons component of the survey were also low. Not one question on this component received a mark higher than a D. As a whole, the committee felt it was necessary to make some large-scale changes with these renovations, and the recommendations in the following section affirm our commitment to this change.

Recommendations

The following recommendations from the SGA are based on the premise that the Book Store is going to be built on the west end of the existing Schwarm Commons where the games area and 122 Schwarm (TV lounge) are currently located. It is suggested that 118 Schwarm be retained as a meeting room. The SGA thinks that the Coordinator of Student Activities Office in 121 Schwarm should be relocated to another location on campus in order to provide adequate dining space in the newly renovated Schwarm Commons. The student organizations

group office space in 121 Schwarm would also need to be relocated preferably in close proximity to the office for the Coordinator of Student Activities. The SGA thought that the second floor of Rentschler Hall would be a possible location for these functions. The existing childcare center space was also considered to be a very good location for the Student Activities offices and a game room area if the childcare center could be relocated.

Space Recommendations for Schwarm Commons

- Design the entire existing Schwarm Commons space to be as open as possible by removing the 2 study cubicles near the elevator and by demolishing 121 Schwarm.
- Add a large number of new comfortable tables and chairs for dining throughout the commons.
- Add lounge seating and small side tables in various locations throughout the commons.
- Add 1 widescreen, high definition, slim form television on the southeast corner of Schwarm Commons near 118 Schwarm.
- Construct a coffee shop area with a set-up comparable to Starbucks with comfortable seating.
- Add 3 semi-permanent computer kiosks for email use near the elevator.
- Add 2-3 hanging, widescreen, high definition, slim form digital signage television units throughout the Commons. These televisions would be used for campus advertising by displaying a PowerPoint presentation that the student organizations would create.
- Add a new, heavy duty, professional quality ping pong table at the north end of Schwarm Commons near the current location of the study cubicles if space is available.
- Install a touch screen jukebox system with mounted speakers in the ceiling.
- Insert 20-30 power outlets throughout the commons.

Food Services Recommendations

- Offer food service kitchen hours from 8:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.
- Improve facility cleanliness and sanitary conditions of food services preparation and sales of the entire food services operation.
- Provide healthy menu options with grilled items and vegetarian dishes.
- Provide a wider variety of menu items such as pizza, and other dessert options. Furthermore, vary the daily lunch special with newer meal ideas.
- Advertise only menu options that are available.
- Lower the price of soda in vending machines to one dollar.
- Allow students to pay for food items at the Harrier's Nest with credit cards and money placed on Student ID cards.

Conclusion

The Schwarm Commons Renovation Committee has worked diligently over the past semester to seek out the opinions of the students. The hard work has paid off, but it doesn't stop here. This report will be submitted to the Campus Dean, the Hamilton Senate, and various Senate committees as well as those who will be assisting in designing the new space in Schwarm Commons. The Student Government Association will work hard to make sure the needs of the students at Miami University Hamilton are not only met, but exceeded.