Association of College Unions International
College Union and Student Activities Consultation

An External Review of the Memorial Union and Office of Student Involvement and Leadership at University of North Dakota

Jan. 27–29, 2015

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Greetings!

I am pleased to enclose final copies of the ACUI College Union and Student Activities consultation report on the Memorial Union and the Office of Student Involvement and Leadership at the University of North Dakota. Our hope is that you find the information valuable as you move forward in strengthening your organization and creating opportunities for students, staff, faculty, and alumni to connect to campus through the important work of the college union and student activities.

Thank you for calling upon ACUI to assist in the process. On behalf of ACUI, I would like to thank you for being a gracious host for our consultants and for putting such thoughtful work into this project. I can tell that you have the best interest of your students and your campus community at heart and that you want to make improvements for the constituents you serve. I sincerely hope this helps you in that lofty goal. It has been my pleasure to work with on this project with you.

If there is anything you need from us in the future, please do not hesitate to ask. I’d be very interested to know how you put this information to use on your campus and if it helps you create change. Good luck to you and your campus!

Sincerely,

Justin Rudisille
Volunteer Relations & Research Strategist
Association of College Unions International
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Introduction

At the request of the vice president for student affairs, a peer review was arranged to assess the programs, services, and the organizational structure, scope, responsibilities, and staffing of the Memorial Union and Office of Student Involvement and Leadership at the University of North Dakota (UND). An onsite review was conducted Jan. 27–29, 2015 to evaluate the current programs and services of both the Memorial Union and the Office of Student Involvement and Leadership and to determine if the organizational structure and departmental mission are properly aligned with the demands and expectations of the university community.

Specifically, the consultant team was asked to: conduct an assessment of the resources, programs, and services that members of the UND campus community (students, staff, and faculty) desire to have in the Memorial Union; review the organizational staffing structure that addresses the programs and services of a successful student union; and provide feedback on policies and procedures and suggestions for alignment with best practices in the operation of student unions.

Numerous documents were reviewed as part of this process including:

- Memorial Union Annual Reports for FY13 & FY14
- Student Involvement and Leadership Annual Reports for FY13 & FY14
- Memorial Union organization charts from 2005–present
- Memorial Union room usage statistics for FY13 & FY14
- Memorial Union meeting room floor plans and capacities
- Dining Services Master Plan from 2013
- Memorial Union Vision & Values
- Assessment of Student Employee Learning report from 2013–14
- Scheduling and Facilities Coordination brochure
- Baseline survey results on branding, 24/7 study space, and old medical school space
- Exceptional UND Strategic Priorities from 2011
- Division of Student Affairs Strategic Plan for FY15–17

The Memorial Union (MU) at UND has a long history of serving students, the campus community, and other stakeholders. With multiple food outlets, meeting rooms of various sizes, lounge space, and numerous programming and service areas, the MU plays a valuable role in university life.

Students are clearly significant stakeholders when considering both the current state and the future opportunities for the MU. Many important services and programs for students reside within the MU. But students are not the only constituents considered in this review. Faculty and staff who engage in meetings and meals throughout the building, prospective students and their families who get their first impression of student involvement when they pass through the building on tours, and the staff who work throughout the building every day are relevant users of the facility.

Stakeholders and constituent groups involved with the on-site visit included senior student affairs leadership, student services directors, student government leaders, Memorial Union/Student Involvement staff, student employees and leaders, faculty representatives from University Senate, MU tenants, UND Dining Services staff, and MU student building managers.
Historical Context for College Unions

Colleges and universities today are as diverse as the constituents they serve. Among many forms, colleges exist as singular locations in brick and mortar form, as online virtual campuses, and as systems of physical campuses spread across a region or even the world. Higher education institutions serve 17-year-old first-year students to 70-year-old retirees and everyone in between, including working parents, returning veterans, full-time, part-time, undergraduate, graduate, rich, poor, oppressed, privileged, and other students with any number of distinguishing characteristics. Regardless of location, type, or population served, it may be argued that at least one distinction remains constant across all colleges and universities: the preponderance of community. It is this existence of community that makes a college collegial.

Advocating the necessity of a vibrant and thriving community on a college campus is, perhaps, a debate so one-sided that one could not lose. If community rests at the core of the college campus, then at the core of the college campus rests the college union and its implied duty to serve as a center for community. The college union is one of the most well-known and archetypal buildings found on college campuses. Environments typically found in these facilities today include multiple food venues; ample lounge spaces that can accommodate a variety of active study, work, and social activities; properly sized meeting and event spaces with appropriate supporting components; and the co-location of related student life and staff office environments (Rullman, van den Kieboom, & Van Jura, 2012). Large spaces typically have focal points or gathering spots that are easily identified.

With multiple user groups—including students, faculty, staff, alumni, parents, and guests—college unions have the distinction of often trying to be all things for all people. This notion has helped these spaces become true community centers, but it has also led some spaces down the road of over-extension. When a space is not able to take on an identity, it can create an unwelcoming environment, or at least one that is not particularly inviting to the user (Strange & Banning, 2001).

One of the most highly regarded space scholars, Ray Oldenburg (1999), touts the importance of the “third place”—that which is neither home nor work, but rather “neutral ground upon which people may gather. There must be places where individuals may come and go as they please, in which no one is required to play host, and in which we all feel at home and comfortable” (p. 22). Oldenburg goes on to reveal the psychological connection that people feel with these third places, not unlike the familiar comfort and support felt when one is at home. It is this concept that often has been compared to the college union.
Executive Summary

The two-day visit at the University of North Dakota (UND) was beneficial in creating many opportunities for stakeholders to contribute to the conversation on how to advance the good work that has traditionally been provided by the staffs associated with the Memorial Union (MU) and the Office of Student Involvement and Leadership (OSIL). It is apparent that they can have a greater impact on the campus community back together as one unit versus remaining separate. The MU and OSIL will affect student success with a common vision and mission to advance student engagement and student learning through various programs, services, and events, while also creating an environment on campus that supports student success.

Although a common theme throughout the two-day visit was to renovate the MU and/or build a new facility, there does not appear to be the financial resources through the institution or private support to make this happen in the near future. The facility itself has a great deal of potential even though it is somewhat dated and has been permitted to drift from its core purpose for the campus community. The Division of Student Affairs will need to identify a new student union and activities professional to lead the reunited department and provide this individual the campus resources to make significant changes and improvements to the facility that will support and advance student engagement and student success through the programs, services, and events facilitated by the staff. The outcome of this investment in personnel will be to re-establish the MU as a destination and brand that resembles a “third place” for the campus community (Oldenburg, 1999).

A complete list of recommendations follows, which are explained in greater detail throughout the sections of this report. Although this summary is offered as a helpful management tool to make the recommendations easy to retrieve, the consultants urge readers to use it within the context of the complete report.

Recommendations

1. The consultant team first recommends merging the two departments and creating a new department name or returning simply to the "Memorial Union." Regardless, the re-merged unit should retain the responsibility of managing and operating the MU with all of its current services along with all of the existing programs, services, and events in the OSIL. This recommendation is not only about bringing the two teams back together, but also about providing a clean slate with a revised commitment to a student-centered facility.

2. A staff team with a newly defined vision, mission, goals, and purpose will be readily welcomed by all of the groups interviewed. The current staffs are ready to be that “new” staff. A comprehensive review of the individual skill sets and interests of staff members should occur, and staff members should be prepared for and open to the opportunity to have redesigned responsibilities (see Recommendation 4).

3. An executive director should be hired to lead this new department. This individual would need to have proven experience in college unions and student activities. The new executive director should likely already serve as an associate director or even a director of a similar size operation on a different campus. The executive director must also be a valued contributor to the greater campus community in relation to campus planning, facilities and maintenance discussions, and strategic planning within the division.
4. Student affairs leadership is highly encouraged to conduct an analysis of all current job descriptions:
   a. Existing position descriptions should reflect a new merged department with a collective vision and mission.
   b. Some functions could and should cross the current department lines in a new merged unit.
   c. There is a current feeling among the staff that their role as an advisor is somewhat minimized, and/or they feel powerless due to the funding source for certain programs and events.
   d. The current portfolio would benefit from staffing resources dedicated to leadership development and volunteer services.

5. If a new executive director role is created to lead a merged department, a significant review and assessment of the existing associate and assistant director roles is strongly advised. There needs to be an effective leadership team for the department that takes full responsibility for all operations, programs, services, facilities, planning, revenue generation, space, tenants/partners, event planning, and partnership building.

6. The MU and OSIL staff currently occupy three different office locations. A thoughtful review of these spaces and functions should take place within the context of space allocation of other tenants/services/retail/administrative functions housed within the MU, giving consideration to the need for students to easily access the offices and services that they require.

7. Review and consider creating “zones” within the MU: dining and retail services, administrative services, student-centered support services, student organizations, programming/entertainment, leisure activities, and MU services.

8. The Division of Student Affairs and MU/OSIL leadership should consider partnering with the bookstore to develop an outlet like a “Bookstore Express” that can help attract various constituents into the facility.

9. An extensive review of the reservations policy should be conducted to both streamline and provide greater consistency in interactions with users of the facilities—including access, purpose of room use, fee structure, etc.

10. The Event Management System (EMS) should be utilized to its greatest extent. Several immediate opportunities exist to improve customer service.

11. The student employment program in the MU can serve as a model for the division, paired with leadership development programs and services.

12. The division leadership must better define its student-staff partnership philosophy so that the staff can be empowered to act accordingly.

13. With Student Government, explore the possibility of the University Program Council transforming into a MU Programming Board, advised by a full-time staff member from the merged MU and OSIL.

14. Create a defined leadership development program inclusive of leadership workshops, seminars, skill building, and officer trainings. This program should be initiated by the staff.
15. Develop a defined volunteer services program inclusive of civic engagement, service learning, and volunteer/community service opportunities for UND students both on and off campus.

16. Explore creating dedicated space for student organizations, which could be managed on an annual basis and marketed to all student organizations.

17. Develop new mission and vision statements, a set of values, and a clear statement of the role and scope of the services, programs, events, and facilities provided by the MU and OSIL.

18. Develop a five-year strategic plan in conjunction with the division's strategic plan. Key strategic initiatives could include: the effective merger of MU and OSIL, redefining staff roles, refurbishment of spaces and furniture, a stronger partnership with Dining Services, and developing a comprehensive plan for space use.

19. Develop an aggressive and innovative communications and marketing plan for the department.

20. Evaluate and implement new use of the institutional colors and branding throughout the facility.

21. Redefine and sustain relationships with division departments, Student Government, student organizations, campus partners, tenants, faculty, staff, and the Grand Forks community.
Major Themes

In summarizing the consultant team’s campus visit at the University of North Dakota (UND), the following themes became common threads among the stakeholders:

1. The Memorial Union (MU) should provide a sense of place and a strong connection with UND.
2. The MU suffers from a lack of identity or brand.
3. There is a lack of campus planning, lack of support for facility development, and deferred maintenance relative to the MU.
4. There is a lack of cross-campus discussion on the impact of new facilities on existing facilities in the context of building campus community, role and scope, and integrated marketing/branding of UND.
5. There appears to be little intentional planning for the location of services throughout the MU.
6. The MU currently supports a 24/7 operation, but many individuals spoke about a lack of activity in the facility as early as 5 p.m.
7. The removal of the bookstore retail operation was detrimental to the MU facility being a point of destination for school spirit and soft goods.
8. There is not a clear understanding of the retail plan for the MU (e.g., the placement of the credit union in basement).
9. A significant gap exists in connecting student learning with service, leadership, and engagement.
10. The role and scope is unclear for the relationship between the programs and services offered by the Office of Student Involvement and Leadership (OSIL) and the Student Government’s University Program Council.
11. Current frontline staff members are not involved in decision making for either the MU or OSIL department.
12. The MU and the OSIL need a strong leader for a newly merged unit, who must also be empowered within the division and on campus.
13. While not mentioned by many, it is significant that the words “Memorial Union” do not appear in the student affairs strategic plan.

The following quotes were taken from stakeholders during the two-day visit and echo a number of the themes identified during stakeholder interviews:

1. “I wish the MU was more like the ones at... St. Thomas, Madison, St. Cloud.”
2. “I wish the MU was more open and you could see things.”
3. “There is a distinct lack of windows; I wish there was more natural light.”
4. “The Terrace is a church basement—comfortable and homey—but not a vibrant student space.”
5. “I wish the furniture was more flexible and usable.”
6. “The MU is old and dingy. ... I wish it was more ... contemporary, welcoming, vibrant, modern, cutting-edge, metro, hip, comfy, inviting.”
7. “There isn’t anything relatable to students in the union.”
8. “The union is where events go to die.”
9. “Student Government is a cool space, but they are not always accessible.”
10. “The renovation in the lower level is great. ... It provides much needed group and individual study space, and the furniture is flexible and comfortable.”
Based on the common themes and quotes from stakeholders, the following big ideas have been identified for moving forward. Reflected in this report’s overall recommendations, these ideas can be seen throughout the following sections: staffing, facilities and services, programming, and strategic planning. The ideas are not ranked but merely listed.

1. Decisions must be made with the best interest of students, the Memorial Union (MU), the Office of Student Involvement and Leadership (OSIL), and/or the institution rather than in the best interest of individuals.
2. Clarity of role and scope is needed for the MU and OSIL.
3. The role of staff as advisor needs to be clarified, both formally and informally.
4. Clear expectations and consistency of expectations for all staff need to be in place, with consideration given to the division’s hierarchy.
5. Data and/or best practices should be utilized to make decisions rather than individual ideas of what is needed.
6. Create more robust programs/services related to leadership development and civic engagement, which are multi-focused for student organizations, student leaders, and other individuals.
7. A department leader is needed that can be trusted by staff, as well as throughout the student affairs division’s hierarchy.
8. Staff members need to feel supported professionally.
9. Create and support a work environment that encourages best practices, assessment and planning, new initiatives, outcomes-based and student-centered decision making, and accountability.
10. Additional coordination of leadership development for student employees, student leaders, student organization members, and other students should be considered.
11. A stronger academic connection with programs and services is needed to support student learning and student success.
12. Consider the creation of an advisory board to the new merged unit that includes faculty, staff, and students and that would provide advice on policies and procedures to the executive director.
13. If the MU and OSIL units are merged under one executive director, there will be a need for:
   a. A strong and experienced professional at the associate or assistant director level to lead the student involvement/programming units, to raise the bar in aspects of programming, and to build greater synergy among the programming and union staff.
   b. A strong and experienced professional at the associate or assistant director level to lead the operations and facilities unit, to build collaborative efforts with the programming staff, and to serve as a liaison with retail operations throughout the MU. These individuals may already be on staff.
Staffing

**Memorial Union**
The Memorial Union (MU) has recently experienced significant changes in leadership, including the retirement of long-serving employees. While perceptions exist as to why the individuals chose to depart, there is a loss nonetheless. The overall staff is fairly lean in numbers, but the positions that do exist play critical roles in the day-to-day operations of the facility. There is a strong sense of camaraderie among the staff and the student leaders/building managers, as well as a true sense of community and team. The staff members who remain with the MU are loyal, competent, and engaged, but they are lacking professional role models to create and sustain a vibrant, proactive, state-of-the-art facility that will truly support community building on campus.

In evaluating the staff structure moving forward, the consultants strongly recommended that the first step is to merge the MU and Office of Student Involvement and Leadership (OSIL) units, similar to the previous structure. A strong leader, who is openly supported by student affairs leadership, must then be given the freedom and flexibility to develop a staffing structure that benefits students and the campus community, rather than individual needs or attributes of the employees. Based on the review of the current staffing model, existing staff strengths/qualifications, and future needs of the MU, it is further recommended that a national search is conducted for the director position. The newly hired director will need to search for additional leadership positions, depending on the role and scope of the positions and the assessed needs of the department. A traditional staffing structure would be two associate directors—one who coordinates the facility operations and one who focuses on expanding opportunities in involvement and leadership.

**Office of Student Involvement and Leadership**
The combination of fraternity/sorority life, student organizations, programming, leadership development, volunteer services, orientation, ambassadors/hosts, and welcome week activities creates a perfect opportunity to create and sustain synergy for student engagement and student success. The office and staff have every chance to connect with students during both the admissions process and the orientation program, establishing themselves as the “go-to office” for student activities and campus events. In addition, the prospect to work with all student organizations throughout the year provides a direct connection with student leaders from all types of student organizations. The implementation of leadership development programs/activities to generate excitement within the student body establishes the OSIL as a true supporter of student success.

Being the conduit that links students to volunteer services and serving as the host department for the ambassadors program also provides the OSIL staff continuous connections with students who are already self-motivated to contribute to the betterment of the campus community. The direct charge to work with and advise the governing bodies and chapters that create the fraternity/sorority community at the University of North Dakota (UND) provides OSIL the ability to effectively facilitate and advise student leaders and organizations. It is these leaders and organizations who demonstrate their willingness to lead, be engaged, and leave a legacy at the university. While some connections are occurring among staff and student leaders, there is a noticeable lack of intentionality on both sides.

There has been quite a bit of staff turnover in OSIL, and those who remain are unsure in their collective direction, maintain a mixed understanding of their role and scope, and feel a sense of disconnection from the division. The current staff has an admirable desire to be successful, impact students, and contribute to the betterment of the campus community and the overall student body.
The role of director for the department has turned over twice in a short time, with one director receiving a promotion within the division and the most recent director serving less than one semester before being assigned to another role on campus. While committed to one another, the staff does not have a clear understanding of their roles and are confused and frustrated over inconsistent expectations across all staff members. A strategic plan is necessary to provide a framework for advancing the good work needed from this department. While the consultants believe the staff has the skills necessary to succeed, it is not apparent that they have a clear sense of what is actually expected of them.

**SWOT Analysis of Staff**

- **Strengths**
  a. Current staff members are loyal, hopeful, eager to do good work, willing and flexible to make adjustments, and want to be successful.
  b. The MU and OSIL staffs are ready to work as one team and to have a leader who can move both groups collectively forward with a shared vision, mission, goals, and expectations.
  c. They desire—and are ready to contribute to—stronger collaborations with each other, in the division, and across the campus.
  d. Staff members take great pride in supporting student success by working with students as individuals, student leaders, and student employees.
  e. While recognizing the history of their organizational structure (originally together and then separate for the last three years), the collective staff demonstrate the ability to look forward and focus on what can be versus what was. In many cases this pressure of “getting back to what we were” is coming from both units.

- **Weaknesses**
  a. The MU staff does not feel they were properly involved in the renovation of the lower level, although they have the responsibility for managing the space.
  b. The two staffs are nervous about the future because they do not feel that they are being fully involved in advancing the next iteration of the units.
  c. Staff members do not see themselves and their respective units in the division’s strategic plan, and thus, they feel little ownership for the strategic plan.
  d. Some staff members do not see themselves as advisors, and when they acknowledge the role, it appears to be a fairly hands-off approach.
  e. In respect to the role and scope of job duties, many OSIL staff members believe (and/or believe they have been told) that their duties and influence are limited. They feel they do not have a budget of their own and can merely advise student organizations on how to use their own budgets.
  f. Staff members perceive that, depending upon the reporting line, there are different expectations for professional dress, office behavior, work/life balance, serving as an advisor to students/organizations, etc.

- **Opportunities**
  a. Staff members are ready and willing to become part of something larger. They see themselves as one department, prefer a new name that encompasses both, and report a desire to be engaged in developing the vision, mission, goals, and strategic plan.
  b. The staff members are ready and willing to explore the role and scope of their duties if there is an understanding of where that may lead them as a new team.
c. A new brand, image, purpose, role, and scope will be required to move forward. The personnel in place are ready to take a leap of faith and move forward, but they desperately want a leader who believes in them, the mission, and a “new beginning.”

- Threats
  a. There is a perceived lack of commitment to the MU operation and facility, as well as a perceived lack of direct role in the allocation, management, and renovation of space.
  b. There is a perceived lack of financial support to the facility, programs, and services.
  c. There is a perceived lack of a department leader who theoretically and literally can “shake up” the two departments to create a new unit with ownership over the entire union facility, inclusive of all programs, services, event planning, and committed to serving UND as its community center.
  d. There is a perception by staff that, while they have a role and scope in advising programs and services, they have no direct control over funding sources.

Feedback from Stakeholders

- The change in leadership has allowed for significant change to occur to date, and there is not necessarily anything standing in the way of moving forward.
- The change in leadership has created a loss in historical perspective on relationships within and outside of the division, as well as with departments/tenants/partners housed in the MU.
- There is a need to get the right programming structure in place to move forward, coupled with a renovation/construction plan for the MU facility.
- There are talented staff members on board already, and the new department/division needs to identify how to build upon their strengths to strengthen the organization.
- A major challenge is the recruitment of new staff, especially given the geographic location. A number of previous searches have been unsuccessful. Some of the contributing factors can be changes, while other cannot. For example:
  a. It can be challenging for new staff members to feel welcomed into the campus culture, which does not always embrace new ideas nor foster the retention of staff.
  b. The role/purpose and financial support of the MU and OSIL is always changing.
  c. The staff role in the current program model is perceived as limited, relying on student organizations, and could limit staff retention. This could be better defined (e.g., student- or staff-led; and/or student-staff partnership; and/or staff-led/student-advised).
- MU staff is responsive in assisting and making an event successful.
- OSIL staff is committed to working with student leaders on existing programs and events.
- Effective partnerships have been developed with those housed within the MU.

Recommendations

1. Merge the two departments, and consider creating a new department name or return simply to the “Memorial Union.” Regardless, the re-merged unit should retain the responsibility of managing and operating the MU with all of its current services along with all of the existing programs, services, and events in the OSIL. While best practices would indicate that the new department could utilize a “student union” or “university center” designation, there are campus perceptions of what the MU has become. Unfortunately, the image is not completely positive.
given the lack of overall facility upkeep and new construction across campus, pulling students and other users away from the building. This recommendation is not only about bringing the two teams back together, but also to focus on providing a clean slate with a revised commitment to a student-centered facility. Programs, services, and activities that support building and enhancing campus community should become a primary focus. While the “Memorial Union” name could easily be kept—simply realigning the OSIL functions into the MU—a major, aggressive, and innovative rebranding campaign would be required. Such a campaign should cover the course of a full academic year, from one summer orientation to the next summer orientation to influence two classes of incoming students.

2. A staff team with a newly defined vision, mission, goals, and purpose will be readily welcomed by all of the groups interviewed. The current staffs are ready to be that “new” staff—talented, hopeful, and excited about what the future may bring. They are comfortable in their current roles and see the opportunity in moving forward as one department, but they know it will take a strong leader. There are members of the staff who would benefit from new opportunities and could thrive in reshaped roles in the new department. A comprehensive review of the individual skill sets and interests of staff members should occur, and staff members should be prepared for and open to the opportunity to have redesigned responsibilities (see Recommendation 4).

3. It is strongly recommended that an executive director with proven union and activities experience be hired to lead this new department. The new executive director should likely already serve as an associate director or even a director of a similar size operation on a different campus. What is attractive about this position is the immediate ability to make an impact with the facility and programs. This position should be a direct report to the associate vice president and dean of students, given the current reporting structure within the division of other directors/executive directors. The person in this position must be seen as the executive director and not a figurehead, having the ability to make decisions to affect the facility, programs, and services. The executive director must also be a valued contributor to the greater campus community in relation to campus planning, facilities and maintenance discussions, and strategic planning within the division.

4. Student Affairs leadership is highly encouraged to conduct an analysis of all current job descriptions. This recommendation is a direct outcome of multiple conversations with individuals, the MU staff team, and the OSIL staff team during the consultant’s campus visit. a. Existing position descriptions should reflect a new merged department with a collective vision and mission, while accurately reflecting clear expectations for employees who are advisors or supervisors to programs, services, student organizations, and event planning.

b. Some functions could and should cross the current department lines in a new merged unit. For example, risk management training could be a shared responsibility between the reservations function and the student organization advisor function, and/or a leadership program coordinator could facilitate leadership development, training, and workshops along with providing supervision to the building managers.

c. There is a current feeling among the staff that their role as advisors is somewhat minimized, and/or they feel powerless due to the funding source for certain programs and events. This needs to be rectified. There are also some vacant positions that should be reevaluated and redefined if the two units are to be merged.

d. The current portfolio would benefit from staffing resources dedicated to leadership development and volunteer services. These functions are described further in the “Programming” section of this report.
5. If a new executive director role is created to lead a merged department, a significant review and assessment of the existing associate and assistant director roles is strongly advised. Given the size of the department, simply having an associate director for facilities and operations and an associate director for programming may not be the best solution, even though this is a fairly typical structure. If it is truly one department, an exploration of cross-functional oversight may be most helpful both internally and externally to the department. Nonetheless, there needs to be an effective leadership team for the department that takes full responsibility for all operations, programs, services, facilities, planning, revenue generation, space, tenants/partners, event planning, and partnership building.

6. The MU and OSIL staff currently occupy three different office locations. A thoughtful review of these spaces and functions should take place within the context of space allocation of other tenants/services/retail/administrative functions housed within the MU, giving consideration to the need for students to easily access the offices and services that they require. While this topic will also be reviewed in the “Facilities and Services” and “Programming” sections of this report, it should be noted that a great deal of space is currently being utilized for quiet and group study, with little intentional planning on how these spaces should actually be utilized. Additionally, there appears to be varying degrees of importance given to the placement of student-centered services, retail, leisure, administrative, and student organization spaces throughout the MU facility. Significant consideration should be given to the current use of the third floor administrative offices, as well as the layout and function of the current OSIL office suite.
Facilities and Services

Facilities
Feedback from multiple constituent groups confirmed the consultant team’s initial impression during the facility tour: the building is dated, furniture and fixtures are tired, sightlines are poor, and natural light is lacking. It should be noted that it was universally agreed that the building remains clean and feels like a safe place, which the consultants also observed. Meeting room décor for the most part is rather muted and does not convey a sense of place. Potential exists for relatively minimal investment in new furniture for public spaces, new tables and chairs in meeting rooms that support flexible setups, and upgraded seating and décor in the Terrace.

Room Reservations
The consultants observed that the Event Management System (EMS) is not currently being used to its full potential. Given expectations by current users, online reservation requests and confirmations should be implemented. Feedback was also received that room reservations are often “padded” with extra time to ensure setups conveniently occur for staff. Major event spaces are often set a day in advance, essentially tying up that space for two days rather than one, and meeting rooms are left open and often occupied by students looking for quiet study space. With proper procedures, staff training, and updated expectations in place, the number of spaces available for reservations could be increased. However, this also speaks to a potentially greater need in the MU and on campus overall. An analysis of space needs may be necessary to determine how space should be defined in the MU (e.g., as meeting space, gathering space, event space, etc.).

Sign & Design
This department could be used as a model for other unions and activities offices. The customer service, quality and volume of work, and expertise of the staff allow this unit to stand out as a premier service provider for students, organizations, and campus departments.

Union Services
There is some confusion, even among those directly related to the MU, about what is provided by this area. It was not apparent to the consultants if there was a direct connection with Sign & Design, despite the proximity, and few students even knew the service existed. A review of this area will be necessary, including an analysis of current offerings and a look toward what services are actually needed by the campus community.

INFO Center
The INFO Center serves as the primary information outlet for the UND campus. The students staffing the center were quite knowledgeable about office locations, how to find campus buildings, campus events, and more. However, many of the INFO Center student staff did not seem to know specific information about OSIL, student organizations, and some of the retail outlets in the MU. There is definite potential, especially if the MU and OSIL units merge, to cross-train employees and provide more opportunities for student employees and student leaders to interact.

Student Employment Program
The student employment program at the MU is rooted strongly in staff training and development, as well as student learning outcomes. The “Workplace Philosophy” has the potential to be adapted across campus, and other partners located within the MU could benefit from using it for their own student employees and student leaders. In fact, this workplace philosophy could serve well as the foundation for the new staffing model of a merged MU and OSIL. Full-time staff should also have clear
expectations, well-planned training, professional development opportunities, and the ability to have some fun in the workplace.

SWOT Analysis of Facilities and Services

• **Strengths**
  a. Current staff is strong, dedicated, and support the building well.
  b. The relationship with building services for custodial/setup appears to be strong.
  c. There are a variety of types of meeting space in the building that are well utilized throughout the day.
  d. The building is clean and provides a safe place for students and the campus community.
  e. A strong student employment model exists, complete with learning outcomes and a workplace philosophy.

• **Weaknesses**
  a. Space in the MU has had some updates and minor renovations but is in desperate need of a larger, more purposeful update.
  b. It was reported that the MU does not hold its own reserve funds for capital expenditures.
  c. Without the presence of a bookstore or campus merchandise outlet, a natural draw for students, guests, and alumni is missing.
  d. Sightlines are minimal, and some spaces feel tight. Natural light is noticeably missing from a majority of the public spaces.

• **Opportunities**
  a. The building has the potential to come to life for students in the evenings, as students report a significant need for both formal and informal gathering spaces on campus.
  b. Space for student organizations can be identified and located within the MU. A large shared/common space for student leaders could be developed that would provide lounge space, meeting space, working/business space, and easy access to OSIL staff for advising.
  c. Several casual seating areas exist throughout the building. A more intentional contemporary design of these spaces could make them much more attractive for student gathering.
  d. The use of EMS for reservations and operations could be expanded.
  e. Cross-training of student and full-time employees can lead to a greater understanding of and support for all units in the building.

• **Threats**
  a. Community spaces are already being created elsewhere on campus and/or nearby—Archives Coffee House, new residence hall dining areas, potential renovation of the Fritz Library, the new School of Medicine facilities, and the repurposing of the old School of Medicine facilities.
  b. The MU does not have ownership over its space. Decisions have been made regarding the facility without including staff members.
  c. The building gets older every year. More planning and budget development needs to be taking place to better ensure there is a future for the MU.
Feedback from Stakeholders

- The campus doesn’t have a sense of what the MU should be.
- The bookstore moving out of the MU has impacted the traffic in the building.
- Many staff shared their memories in respect to the vibrancy that used to be in the MU.
- Financially speaking, the MU is almost exclusively student fee-driven.
- Among the stakeholders based in the MU, the personality of the traditional union has been lost, now feeling more like “tenants and a landlord” in respect to the facility.
- There needs to be more flexible space, dining, retail, and “sticky spaces” where students feel comfortable lingering.
- Other than summer orientation, there is little to support the MU in being a point of destination for all students.
- The MU doesn’t feel student-oriented, especially in the evening. The hours of operation do not meet student needs, being too dark after 4:30 p.m.
- Meeting rooms are used quite often for studying by students, but the primary users of the meetings rooms are faculty and staff.
- Space dedicated for student organizations is lacking.
- There is a lack of retail space to attract students, while many first-year students without cars have little within walking distance of campus.
- The MU doesn’t feel like the heart of campus anymore.
- A reference to Archives Coffee Shop or a likeness to the Wellness Center was heard many times as spaces for “social interactions,” which is lacking from the MU.
- The newly renovated lower level is attracting students now for studying.
- The residence hall renovation at Wilkerson Hall was shared as a concern that could affect the MU.
- Many shared a wish that the MU was more welcoming; was more open; was a place where you could see more things; and could get rid of its outdated look. Specifically, the lack of windows in general spaces and offices blocking natural light was cited.
- Students expressed an interest in having a place to leave “stuff” during the day.
- Many individuals mentioned that they feel constricted or antsy when sitting in the MU.
- The furniture needs to be more flexible and usable. For example, the café tables are not conducive for two people, and the coffee tables are too low for using laptops or reading books.
- The schedule renovation/retrofitting of the old School of Medicine facility will be of concern if it has retail space and dining services—a direct competition for the MU.

Recommendations

7. Review and consider creating “zones” within the MU: dining and retail services, administrative services, student-centered support services, student organizations, programming/entertainment, leisure activities, and MU services. Currently, there seems to be a mixture of services and functions throughout the facility, but there is not necessarily any specific reason as to what is placed where in the MU.

8. The Division of Student Affairs and the MU/OSIL leadership should consider partnering with the bookstore to develop an outlet like a “Bookstore Express” that can help attract various constituents into the facility. A business model would need to be developed, but initial
observations suggest that the location of the bookstore—practically off campus adjacent to a merchandise shop—is a duplication of services. Conversations with bookstore leadership should include opportunities for expanding their market and fulfilling a demand that is currently unmet in the heart of campus.

9. An extensive review of the reservations policy should be conducted to both streamline and provide greater consistency in interactions with users of the facilities—including access, purpose of room use, fee structure, etc.

10. The Event Management System (EMS) should be utilized to its greatest extent. Several immediate opportunities exist to improve customer service. Staff members with reservations responsibility are strongly encouraged to attend the annual EMS users conference and/or visit other campuses that use the same system so staff can develop the necessary knowledge and skills.

11. The student employment program in the MU can serve as a model for the division, paired with leadership development programs and services.
Programming

Student Organizations
Although there is a dedicated staff member for student organizations, the majority of this past year was spent on the education of risk management issues and certifying that the student organizations had met their responsibilities in the area of risk management, rather than on programming or student development. There was clear frustration shared in respect to the lack of opportunities to work with student organizations, as in general they typically do not get the same amount of attention or dedicated services as student government, fraternities and sororities, major campus programming organizations, orientation leaders, and resident assistants. However, the direct impact that student organizations can have on student involvement and engagement is tremendous given the numerous categories represented in the student organization community: honorary, service, academic discipline, cultural, social, governmental, civic, recreational/intramural, and fraternity/sorority life, to name a few. All of the organizations would benefit from leadership skill building, community engagement, and organization support.

It should also be noted that, other than the reservable tables outside the OSIL, there was little indication that student organizations had any significant spaces within the MU. It was also shared by a various constituent/stakeholder groups that student organizations were not utilizing the MU for meetings or programs. This is both a lost opportunity and a disconnect between the MU, the OSIL, and student organizations.

General Programming
The current perception is that students do “all” of the programming, having all influence on the budget. Staff members are most proud of the mentoring provided to student leaders, employees, and managers, but they believe there are many missed opportunities for staff-driven programs and services due to the funding source for programming resources.

A number of stakeholders commented on the decline of nightly/weekly programming. Most individuals interviewed mentioned the need for improvement, more consistency, and development of additional programs and activities. Members of the MU student employment staff indicated some interest in contributing to programming based on their experiences attending the ACUI regional conferences, which is an untapped area for more potential student-led programming.

The locations within the MU dedicated to student programming are limited. While there is a loading dock, the facility is not conducive for many entertainers and events. Other possible spaces within the MU include the larger ballroom and the mid-size meeting rooms.

University Program Council
The University Program Council (UPC) hosts a majority of its programs in the MU, and a good relationship exists between UPC, OSIL, and the MU. Clarification of UPC’s role and mission is needed, specifically reflected in a number of stakeholder comments about the decline of nightly/weekly programming. Reasons mentioned by students for not attending events in the MU included: the lack of attractive locations/spaces, the reduced number of events, and a lack of on-campus transportation in the evening during the cold weather seasons.

Leadership
There does not appear to be a carefully defined leadership development program. The OSIL staff does not appear to be initiating programming for basic skill development, nor encouraging participation in
leadership conferences and seminars for emerging and established student leaders, and confusion seems to exist about whose responsibility it is to provide such programs and services. There is also a missed opportunity to create a student leadership program focused on student organization leaders and members, fraternity and sorority leaders and members, and student governing organizations. There could also be a partnership with academic affairs as a contributor to first-year experiences through seminars, university introductory courses, and so forth. A great opportunity exists to build on the leadership development programming that currently takes place with the building managers.

Fraternity and Sorority Life
The Fraternity and Sorority Life office relies on approval for Panhellenic Council or Interfraternity Council funding to do programming but does not have control or responsibility for funds directly. Opportunities exist to create student leadership programs focused on fraternity and sorority leaders, as well as a connection to expanding some first-year initiatives. With more than 1,300 members involved with 20 organizations, there is a clear critical mass that staff can work with to provide positive outcomes not only for the members, but for the campus community as well.

New Student Orientation/Welcome Weekend
New Student Orientation and Welcome Weekend are great programs supervised by a full-time staff member in OSIL. While this position and portfolio has moved a number of times between enrollment management and OSIL, the current home in OSIL appears to be working well. However, based on the consultants’ conversations, the final destination of the orientation function may not yet be determined. Strong consideration should be made to maintain the orientation function as part of OSIL and the MU as a whole. There are many strong connections with student involvement, student engagement, and building a sense of community that make it a natural connection with leadership development, student organizations, and volunteer services.

The Student Ambassador program, similar to the orientation function, is also supervised by the same staff position. Student ambassadors are considered the face of many UND events. There are many models for where such a program is housed, and ultimately, this would be determined by division leadership. At this point in time, it does fit within the OSIL portfolio but could easily be an extended function of enrollment management.

Family and Parent Programs
Although the consultants spent little time discussing family and parent programming, it makes logical sense that such a function remain within the OSIL portfolio, if desired.

SWOT Analysis of Programming

- **Strengths**
  a. Both student leaders and staff see the need for a greater level of programming.
  b. The dedication of the students on the UPC to make a difference is impressive.
  c. Students in other organizations (e.g., fraternity and sorority life, veterans, multicultural organizations, etc.) want to see and desire to support additional programming.
  d. There appears to be a willingness to partner with UND Housing Department programming efforts to increase the programming options for new students and residential students.
• Weaknesses
  a. There is a disconnect between Student Government and OSIL in respect to programming via the UPC on the purpose, goals, desired outcomes, and influence on program selection and funding.
  b. There was little discussion on the efforts by other student organizations on programming across campus and in collaboration with UPC.
  c. Some staff members do not see themselves as advisors to programming entities, and when they acknowledge the role, it appears to be a fairly hands-off approach.
  d. In respect to the role and scope of job duties, many staff members within OSIL believe (and/or believe they have been told) that their duties and influence are limited. They feel they do not have a budget of their own and can merely advise student organizations on how to use their own budgets.
  e. Evening and weekend programming has decreased in quantity and quality over the last couple of semesters, and challenges exist for getting students in to the MU in the evening and on the weekends for social activities.
  f. There is a lack of adequate programming space in the MU.
  g. Students participating in the interviews stated that the on-campus bus services have fewer options to get students to and from the MU during evening hours.

• Opportunities
  a. Student leaders are eager to find the perfect recipe for programs, locations, timing, and financial resources to get students to the MU in the evening and on the weekends.
  b. Staff members are ready and willing to explore the role and scope of their duties if there is an understanding of where that may lead them as a new team.
  c. Creating a more engaging space for student organizations could encourage use of the MU for student organization meetings, events, and recruitment efforts.
  d. Support services for student organizations could be expanded.
  e. Opportunities exist for leadership development programs and workshops for individuals, student organization officers and members, and established leaders.
  f. Efforts are needed in promoting civic engagement activities and volunteer services across the campus.

• Threats
  a. There is a perceived lack of commitment to the MU operation and the facility.
  b. There is a perceived lack of a direct role in the allocation, management, and renovation of space to support student engagement and community building.
  c. There is a perceived lack of financial incentives to the MU and OSIL to expand support programs and services to student organizations.
  d. There is a perception by staff that, while they have a role and scope in advising programs and services, they have no direct control over funding sources.

Feedback from Stakeholders

• MU doesn’t feel like a destination at the heart of campus anymore. Students seem to prefer places such as Archives Coffee Shop or the Wellness Center, though a stronger understanding is needed of what physical spaces students go to for social interaction.
• The preferred programming structure needs to be in place prior to moving forward with any renovation of construction plans for the MU.
• Students are hungry for big festival-style events that occur at Madison or Twin Cities campuses.
• No professional programmers are funded thru the MU, as all programming funds are owned by the Student Government.
• OSIL staff may be seen by campus as “programmers” but they don’t have the resources or responsibilities to fulfill that role.
• Questions exist about the purpose of the MU and OSIL. Is it a student union or a university union? Is programming student-led, staff-led, or done in partnership?
• There is a lack of a common understanding about what programming students truly want, as well as what role programming plays in student learning.
• Space dedicated for student organizations is significantly lacking.
• There is an interest in allowing UPC more “freedom,” given inconsistencies with the organization’s relationship with Student Government over time. Likewise, a few individuals suggested that UPC could become an MU program.
• The MU and OSIL staff is collaborative on the front end so that events can be successful.
• The MU and OSIL relationship with athletics has improved greatly.
• There have been major shifts in both nightly and weekly programming, which is lacking in comparisons to past years.
• The staff role with student organizations is seen more in registration and rule enforcement, rather than as advisors. Significant potential exists to create more of a student development model for interaction with student leaders and organizations.

**Recommendations**

12. The division leadership must better define its student-staff partnership philosophy so that the staff can be empowered to act accordingly.

13. With Student Government, explore the possibility of the UPC transforming into a MU Programming Board, advised by a full-time staff member from the merged MU and OSIL.

14. Create a defined leadership develop program inclusive of leadership workshops, seminars, skill building, and officer trainings. This program should be initiated by the staff. There appears to be some confusion on whose role and responsibility it is to provide such programs and services, but there is a great opportunity to build on the leadership development programming that currently takes place with the MU building managers. For consideration, there could be a wonderful opportunity to create a crossover leadership function between the two units in the new, merged department.

15. Develop a defined volunteer services program inclusive of civic engagement, service learning, and volunteer/community service opportunities for UND students both on and off campus. Although there are some limited activities promoting such programs, this is an area that could and should create greater programming and student engagement. There are numerous ways to support initiatives around monthly cultural-based celebrations (e.g., a Martin Luther King Jr., Cesar Chavez, and/or Harvey Milk Day of Service), and the opportunity to partner with faculty and academic units engagement in service learning for their courses is particularly worthy of consideration. It could also serve as single point of connection for community-based agencies and student organizations seeking opportunities to contribute to the greater Grand Forks area.
16. Explore creating some dedicated space for student organizations, which could be managed on an annual basis and marketed to all student organizations. There is a lack of presence of student organizations in the MU. While there are mailboxes available in the OSIL and tables to reserve, there is no “footprint” for student organizations other than Student Government and UPC physically in the MU.
Strategic Planning

There is not a strong strategic plan for either the MU or the OSIL. In addition, concerns were expressed about where the two departments fall within the vision of the Division of Student Affairs. Without a relevant marketing and communication plan for either department, opportunities to connect with campus constituencies are lost. Both have great potential to help brand the student experience and provide a true sense of place that feels like the University of North Dakota, using institutional colors, mission, vision, values, and other imagery.

“Exceptional UND” provides a natural outlet for strategic planning for the MU and OSIL. One initiative of the university's strategic priorities is to:

“Encourage Gathering: We encourage gathering and the personal interaction of students, faculty, staff, and community members to facilitate idea sharing and develop a sense of community.”

The MU and OSIL programs are specifically mentioned in this initiative, and they should take a large portion of the ownership on campus around the encouragement of gathering. Students at UND are eager for gathering spaces—spaces that are safe, readily available, flexible, convenient, and provide easy access to food and beverage.

A comprehensive review of space will be a critical element in the near future of the MU organization. With new facilities being built and renovated across campus and many traditional student services moving online, there will continue to be fewer and fewer reasons for students and campus community members to visit the MU. An important strategic initiative to consider will be the intentional planning of space usage to include tenants, retail, food offerings, programming space, office space, services, function space, meeting space, student organization space, and more.

Recommendations

17. Develop new mission and vision statements, a set of values, and a clear statement of role and scope of the services, programs, events, and facilities provided by the MU and OSIL.

18. Develop a five-year strategic plan in conjunction with the division's strategic plan. Key strategic initiatives could include the effective merger of MU and OSIL, redefining staff roles, refurbishment of spaces and furniture, a stronger partnership with Dining Services, and developing a comprehensive plan for space use.

19. Develop an aggressive and innovative communications and marketing plan for the department.

20. Evaluate and implement new use of the institutional colors and imagery throughout the facility.

21. Redefine and sustain relationships with division departments, Student Government, student organizations, campus partners, tenants, faculty, staff, and the Grand Forks community.
Conclusions

There is much to be proud of at the University of North Dakota (UND) with the efforts being put forth by the Memorial Union (MU) and the Office of Student Involvement and Leadership (OSIL). To help move these units forward, the consultants have outlined specific recommendations in each area and provided a master list within the executive summary of this report. There clearly is work that must occur between the two units as they blend and develop the next iteration of the Memorial Union. Notwithstanding the specific observations of the MU and OSIL overall operations, there are some additional recommendations to UND and the Division of Student Affairs, as the lack of a clear understanding of the university’s master planning in respect to facilities was recognized early during the consultants’ campus visit.

While it was not the review team’s charge to look at this process, it was apparent that there seems to be a lack of inclusivity with respect to existing facilities, specifically the MU. The recent renovation of the dining center in close proximity to the MU and the lack of renovation to the dining spaces within the MU is a concern with the overall impression that the campus community—specifically UND students—have of the relevance of the space. Every stakeholder group who participated in the interview process discussed the major expansion and renovation to the residential complex. While the new space is designated for residential students, there is a real concern that it will either pull programs and activities out of the MU or that it will not be able to serve off-campus residents effectively. Additional apprehension was expressed about what impact possible renovations to the old School of Medicine facilities could have on food and retail services on campus, which will continue to detract faculty, staff, and students from utilizing the MU.

At the division level, the consultants recommend that the strategic plan articulate the role of the MU and OSIL in student success and the contributions they have to the division’s overall mission and vision. Although there is emphasis on assessment throughout the division, the implementation of a strategy for using student learning and program outcomes to inform decision making is strongly encouraged. At no point during the two-day visit was it clear that decisions on programs, services, or facilities were outcomes-based.

There are endless possibilities in moving forward. This external review provides some strong affirmations of what is already known from the vice president for student affairs, to the professional staff, and to the student leaders and employees of the MU and OSIL. The changes are both needed and desired in advancing the good work of these departments. This external review should also provide some objective thoughts and recommendations to better align operations with best practices in the field of college unions and student activities for the betterment of the collective operation.

Although all recommendations might not be practical for UND, the MU, or the OSIL given current situations and/or campus culture, it is with collective professional experience that the consultants encourage some risks to be taken to move forward. If none of the variables change in the current operation (e.g., the MU, the OSIL, facilities planning, staffing, programming, vision, and leadership), the outcomes of the existing scenario are also unlikely to change. The time is right to take an informed leap of faith to innovate and implement best practices for the improvement of campus community for the success of UND students.
Appendix A: Campus Visit Schedule

Tuesday, January 27

7:45am – 8:45am  Breakfast with Cassie Gerhardt

9:00am – 9:30am  Meet with VP for Student Affairs Cabinet
                  • Lori Reesor, VP for Student Affairs
                  • Laurie Betting, Associate VP
                  • Lisa Burger, Assistant VP
                  • Cara Halgren, Associate VP & Dean of Students
                  • Sol Jenson, Assistant VP

9:45am – 10:45am  Tour of the Memorial Union with Aaron Flynn

11:00am – 12:00pm Meet with Student Services Directors
                  • Cara Halgren, Associate VP & Dean of Students
                  • Cassie Gerhardt, Assistant Dean of Students
                  • Connie Frazier, Executive Director of Housing & Dining
                  • Vicki Morrisette, Director of Judicial Affairs & Crisis Programs

12:00pm – 12:45pm Lunch – Terrace Dining Center

1:00pm – 2:00pm  Meet with Student Government Executive Officers
                  • Tanner Franklin, President
                  • Brett Johnson, Vice President
                  • Jazmyn Friesz, Chief of Staff
                  • Matt Bluhm, Treasurer

2:30pm – 3:30pm  Meet with MU/Involvement Staff – Topic: Programming & Activities
                  Carrie, Brandon, Rebecca, Melissa, Bonnie, Andrew, Kristi, Aaron, Alyssa, Sara

3:30pm – 4:00pm  Meet with Michelle Rakoczy, Director of Student Affairs Technology

4:00pm – 4:30pm  Meet with Eric Plummer, AVP for Public Safety & Chief of Police

5:00pm – 6:00pm  Open Forum with MU Student Employees and Student Leaders
                  JT, Rachel, Dani 1, Cassie, Dani 2 Cheyene, Emily

Wednesday, January 28

8:00am – 8:45am  Meet with Melissa Gjellstad, Assistant Professor and Chair of the Univ. Senate; and
                  Ryan Zerr, Professor and Past Chari of the Univ. Senate

9:00am – 10:00am Meet with MU Tenants
                  Dining, OneStop, Tech/SILT, UCard, Student Success, Post Office, Building Services,
                  Multicultural Center, Athletic Ticket Office, Veterans & Non Traditional Services

10:15am – 11:15am Meet with MU/Involvement Staff – Topic: Facility & Services
                  Aaron, Rebecca, Melissa, Bonnie, Suzanne, Jay, Kristi, Brandon, Carrie, Alyssa, Sara

12:00pm – 12:45pm Lunch – Old Main Place
1:00pm – 2:00pm  Meet with Dining Partners
• Orlynn Rosaasen, Director of Dining Services
• Jeff St. Michel, Assistant Director of Retail Dining
• Ed Martin, General Manager Old Main
• Andrea Greene, Catering

2:15pm – 2:45pm  Meet with Sarah Nissan, Director of Student Affairs Marketing

3:00pm – 4:00pm  Open Feedback Session for Staff
19 women, 2 men attended

4:15pm – 5:00pm  Meet with MU Building Managers
Nick, Clayton, Tyler, Jackie, David, Conner, Sam, Dylan

5:00pm – 6:00pm  Open Forum with MU Student Employees and Student Leaders
Large number of students, primarily from the University Program Council and the MU Info Center

Thursday, January 29

8:30am – 9:00am  Review plans for Wilkerson renovation

9:00am – 9:30am  Meet with Will Beaton, Editor-in-Chief of the Dakota Student

9:30am – 10:00am  Meet with Sara Kaiser, Kristi Okerlund, Alyssa Walker

10:00am – 10:30am  Wrap-up with Lori Reesor, VP for Student Affairs

11:30am – 12:00pm  Meet with Aaron Flynn, Rebecca Slade, and Brandon Wallace

12:00pm-1:30pm  Lunch and wrap-up with Cassie Gerhardt & Cara Halgren
Appendix B: The Role of the College Union

The union is the community center of the college, serving students, faculty, staff, alumni, and guests. By whatever form or name, a college union is an organization offering a variety of programs, activities, services, and facilities that, when taken together, represent a well-considered plan for the community life of the college.

The union is an integral part of the educational mission of the college.

- As the center of the college community life, the union complements the academic experience through an extensive variety of cultural, educational, social, and recreational programs. These programs provide the opportunity to balance course work and free time as cooperative factors in education.
- The union is a student-centered organization that values participatory decision-making. Through volunteerism, its boards, committees, and student employment, the union offers first-hand experience in citizenship and educates students in leadership, social responsibility, and values.
- In all its processes, the union encourages self-directed activity, giving maximum opportunity for self-realization and for growth in individual social competency and group effectiveness.

The union’s goal is the development of persons as well as intellects.

Traditionally considered the "hearthstone" or "living room" of the campus, today's union is the gathering place of the college. The union provides services and conveniences that members of the college community need in their daily lives and creates an environment for getting to know and understand others through formal and informal associations.

The union serves as a unifying force that honors each individual and values diversity. The union fosters a sense of community that cultivates enduring loyalty to the college.

*Adopted by the Association’s general membership in 1996, this statement is based on the Role of the College Union statement, 1956.*
Appendix C: References


Appendix D: About the Consultant Team

Daniel M. Maxwell
Associate Vice President for Student Affairs, University of Houston
As a student affairs professional in higher education, Daniel Maxwell’s career path has included multiple functional areas at various institutional types in a typical student affairs/life/services division. A significant part of his career has been directly involved in fraternal life, student activities, and student unions. He also served as the president of the Association of College Unions International for two terms (2004–06) and then served as the ACUI Education and Research Fund chair for three years.

As the associate vice chancellor/associate vice president for student affairs, Maxwell provides executive administrative support for the Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services for the University of Houston System and at the University of Houston. Specifically, he provides leadership, strategic vision, organization, and administrative oversight of campus-wide programs, services, and operations for the following units and functional initiatives/areas: University Career Services, Urban Experience Program, Strategic Planning and Assessment, Marketing and Communication, Student Success Initiatives, Academic and Faculty Collaborations, Advancement, Emergency Management, Student Housing Initiatives, and other division-wide committees.

Corbin J. Smyth
Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Life, University of Minnesota Duluth
Corbin Smyth has spent the entirety of his professional career serving college unions and student activities/student life areas. He served as the films chair on his undergraduate union board, as a union building manager in graduate school, and as the director of cocurricular programs at a small private university. He has advised student governments, fraternal life, and student programming boards, and has supervised the areas of student activities, orientation, first-year seminar, and outdoor recreation. On the facilities side, Smyth has played an active role with five renovation/construction projects ranging from 7,000 to 60,000 square feet.

In his current role with University of Minnesota Duluth, Smyth provides leadership and administrative oversight for Parking Operations, Dining Services, Kirby Student Center, and the Office of Sustainability, while also providing divisional leadership for technology and assessment initiatives. He currently serves as the international ACUI research coordinator. When he’s not thinking about college unions, Smyth devotes plenty of time to youth baseball, filling the role of president of the Duluth Eastern Little League.