

Promotion of a New Student Center

Dia'ane Daniel-Richards, April Dong, Karel Farfan, Yoshimi Lin

CST 332 Group Project: Community Change Action Kit Framing Paper

April 20th, 2023



Introduction

For many long years at the University of Portland, students have always found ways to discover their sense of belonging to what it means to be a part of the University of Portland. Through clubs and athletics that exist here on the Bluff, new communities are made and relationships emerge from the ongoing dynamics that occur on campus. Despite its enrichment in diversity and inclusion, the campus itself lacks a central space for all this to occur. The creation of a student center will invoke more student engagement in the community and provide a space for the community to come together in a central hub to collaborate and have access to resources that the facility will provide. In the next segments of this paper, we will begin to describe why it is necessary that the university should propose the construction of a new student center and through the action kit, what persuasive communication tactics and overall strategy resources designed would be best to guide the chosen stakeholder to achieve this community change.

The Intended Stakeholder Client Group

Our intended client stakeholder group of advocates would be the Associated Students of the University of Portland, often referred to as ASUP. This group of students are elected to the ASUP Executive Board by students through an election process at the end of each academic year, putting them in a representative position for the entirety of the student body. As a governmental figure for the student body, their mission statement states that “ASUP serves and represents all UP students by actively seeking opinions and encouraging participation.”

(Associated Students)

In alignment with the proclaimed mission to act as a representative group for the students, our choice of ASUP as a client group can act as a touchpoint to both students and faculty. Through their contact with both groups and their mission to represent students by

seeking opinions, we are able to understand the needs of the students and make adjustments accordingly. As an umbrella group, some of the represented stakeholders involved in our choice involve, most notably, clubs, commuter students, and students as individuals relative to the entirety of the student body at the University of Portland.

This Project's UP Stakeholder Group/s Targeted to Implement Desired Changes

One of our first steps in this process was to determine which groups on campus had the power to implement this change. We knew one of the biggest obstacles to this building would be funding it, especially with the financial disruption the university has been facing. Because of ASUP's endowment fund(a fund that is funded using whatever money is left over from club budgets at the end of spring semester), they will be able to donate over 350,000 dollars to create the first donation for the building. This is done to encourage outside donors to contribute towards the new building. However, The Associated Students of the University of Portland does not have the authority to proceed with the process of adding a new structure to campus. This is where the President's Leadership Cabinet has control. Members of relevant departments such as in Land Development/Usage as well as Financial Affairs, make up this cabinet. We intend to make this group our target client as they have the power to begin the student center.

Unpacking our UP Partner/Client's Desired UP Community Change

Framing the Current Exigency: How We Understand the Issues

Working with our client, ASUP, our group hopes to address the limited opportunities UP clubs face on campus by expanding and revamping the current meeting space, St. Mary's Student Center. St. Mary's is home to some of the largest organizations on campus such as The Beacon, ASUP, campus ministry, and the Moreau Center for Service and Justice. Despite the many impactful decisions that are created within the center, St. Mary's is tucked away in a corner of campus and is in desperate need of renovation. Particularly speaking, our client group, ASUP, does not have as much traction as it could due to their office hours and open meetings taking place around campus such as in the library or the Pilot House. However, with our proposed action kit, ASUP will finally have the ability to separate their school, work, and social life by consolidating their meeting options into one place.

We feel that the revival of St. Mary's will allow for the clubs who are already established within the center to positively expand in terms of membership, quality, and outreach. The current state of the St. Mary's Student Center limits the potential of club expansion and can be seen as an issue of .

Decision-making Criteria: How We Judged Among Possible Options Forward

If we were to move forward with this action plan, we hope to uphold these specific standards when tackling the issues within St. Mary's Student Center: accessibility, sustainability, student-centered design, and community.

In order to reach the needs of all UP students, the first standard we should apply is accessibility. The University of Portland's Shepard Academic Resource Center is a resource for students to achieve their academic needs that may extend outside the classroom. One of the services they offer to students is Accessible Education Services (AES) which "works in partnership with students to facilitate individually-tailored accommodations, according to student

need (*Accessible Education Services | University of Portland, n.d.*)” AES assists students in need of developing an accommodation plan to ensure necessary and appropriate classroom accommodations as well as non-classroom accommodations such as during club events. By keeping accessibility in mind, we hope to create a space that is welcoming and meets the needs of all UP students and faculty members

Another standard we think should be applied is sustainability. Being located in Portland, a place referred to as “America’s number one environmentally friendly city, (*Portland Is the Most Sustainable City in the U.S., According to a New Study, 2022*)” the University of Portland recognizes this and aims to develop and practice a sustainable way of living within planetary boundaries through disciplinary and interdisciplinary studies of the arts, sciences, and humanities (*Sustainability & Social Responsibility | University of Portland, n.d.*). By keeping this standard of sustainability in mind, we would be able to continue supporting the university’s goal to promote social and environmental justice as well as helping our planet through the implementation of alternative resources and renewable energy sources.

Besides structural elements such as accessibility and sustainability, we feel that designing a student-centered space is an important criteria that should be applied when communicating the qualities for our decision on this issue. Student-centered design occurs when there is an extensive amount of attention focused on the needs, interests, and skills of students when creating courses and physical spaces for students. We should aim to create a space that meets the needs of all students since they will be the ones to use and operate the center.

Through this, we also hope to prioritize and continue creating a sense of community among students. The University of Portland is a tight knit community due to the small undergraduate student body as well as the small classroom sizes. Community is an important

quality that the university prides itself in, and we hope to keep this criteria in mind when redesigning St. Mary's Student Center to create an inviting space for anyone who enters.

Our Community Best-Fit Solution

Brett Leavitt, a design principal at HMC architects says "A student center is bursting with potential for creating dynamic, student-centric experiences that can build well-balanced students and promote a positive campus culture." (Boul, 2017) Addressing the aforementioned concerns, we felt our best fit solution would be to take down the current St. Mary's building and remodel it into a space that is inviting and accessible to students while maintaining the standards previously mentioned. Many amenities intended to be included in the newly envisioned building perpetuate different aspects of these standards through the emphasis in formation of design.

Upon entrance, the first floor is designed to emphasize accessibility and community. With stairs and elevators located furthest from the entrance, all students entering the center are exposed to ASUP offices, the Beacon, and club spaces. By walking past these groups, students have readily available opportunities to create personal relationships with their representative body, build exposure towards school news and events, and gain awareness of extracurricular occurrences. This awareness increases engagement in all respective groups, and fosters a mutually beneficial space for everyone involved.

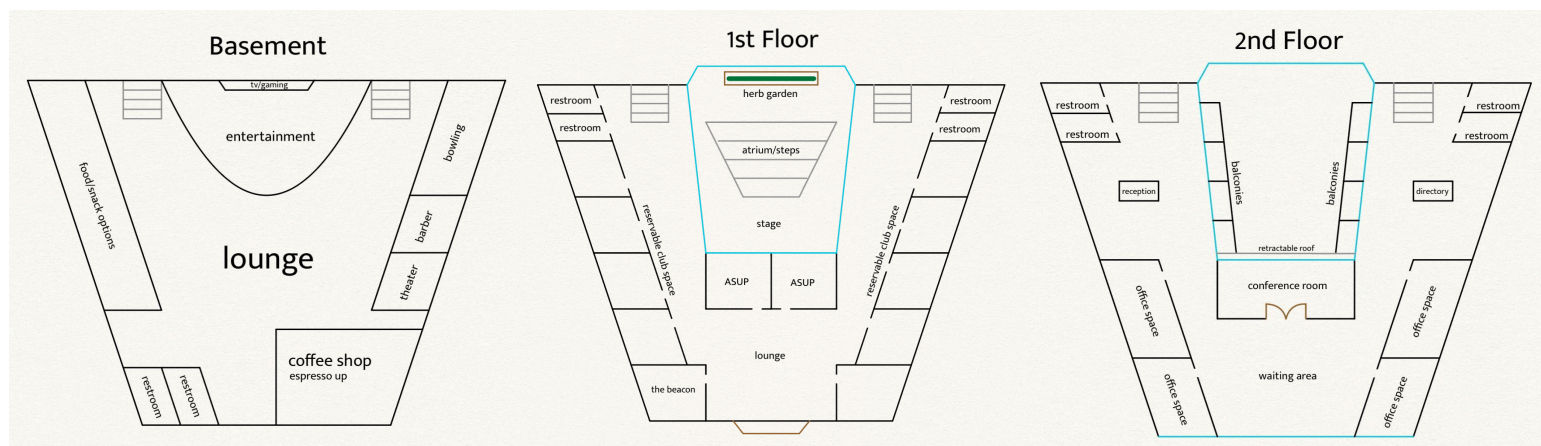
In a courtyard style opening located in the center, there would be a convertible outdoor space with concrete steps in the formation of an atrium to double as an outdoor work space as well as an impromptu performing space to perpetuate opportunities for performing arts such as orchestra, band, even individual students who might play guitar or enjoy slam poetry. With glass walls and balcony style sliding doors, all individuals entering the building can see any events

occurring and join at any time. A convertible roof would cover the center of the building in the case of bad weather, allowing the space to maintain utility year round.

The second floor would reinforce accessibility, in addition to perpetuating student-centrism. This floor would house administrative offices with direct correlation to current students, potentially including financial aid, admissions, the Moreau Center for Service and Justice, campus ministry, the registrar, and any other administrative offices that may offer direct, non-academic resources to students. Another feature of the second floor would be balconies that open into the same courtyard atrium space from an elevated level. These balconies would give faculty and students the ability to get fresh air, as well as furthering the idea that the open space is visible from as much of the building as possible to promote any impromptu events in action.

The last floor, the basement, will serve as a student lounge designed heavily around the values of student-centrism and community building. The majority of the space would act as a lounge area for students, with couches, beanbags, TVs, and game consoles such as a PC, Nintendo Switch, Wii, or PlayStation, to name a few. Additionally, many other universities offer amenities such as bowling alleys and barbershops within their student centers, creating a space for students to bond on a budget. Other student-centered features include a barbershop for students without cars who need haircuts, a food court with more “fast food” options for students who want something to snack on while they hang out, and a coffee shop designed as a space for students to converse or study instead of a grab and go style bar. This coffee shop would also host EspressoUP in the same time window on Wednesday nights, offering students the free coffee and Italian sodas they currently enjoy in a more sophisticated space. All these act as suggestions, and through communication with ASUP, and the rest of the student body accordingly, different amenities can be chosen in accordance with what the larger student body would vote on.

The aforementioned layout and amenities would be roughly visualized as such:



Some features of this student center not contained by a floor in specific would contribute toward sustainability efforts. These would include a small herb garden in the outdoor space, solar panel powering, or other sources of renewable energy, spaces to compost that could directly go into the herb garden, and big windows for natural lighting when the weather permits to reduce the building's carbon footprint.

Justifying our Action Kit's Fitness to Spur UP Community Change

The Stakeholder Target Understood as an Audience

In our process, we first decided what the characteristics of our intended audience would be, and how we could persuade them into implementing our idea. One of the biggest groups we knew we had to target were those who had the power to make this change. After deciding which group we would focus on, we had to consider the reasons that this building would appeal to the cabinet. With the continuous problems that the university has faced over the last couple years like student admission rates and student retention, we knew that would be one of the biggest things to focus on. To be able to appeal to the cabinet through these topics, we wanted to make the student center a focal point of the school. The school lacks a focal point where students can

gather daily and school tours can focus on. Because our student center would be a focal point for tours, we knew we wanted to have offices like admissions, financial aid and the registrar's office in the building so that potential students would have a lasting good impression on the school, and be able to find all the important offices quickly. We've decided that this would contribute to student retention and higher admission rates.

We've also taken into consideration the cost of building a new building that would include all the additions we suggest. Because of this, we want to make the building 100% donor funded meaning it would not cost the school anything to build it. We've had generous donors in previous years that have aided in the help of building some academic buildings, however, we believe that with the initial donation of ASUP, donors will see how important the addition of this building is to our campus.

Lastly, this building is something that students have been asking for for a long time. It would help bring students, staff and community members together. Because we are suggesting having a cafe, this would be a great spot for students to either work solo or together as well as a place for students and professors to meet. With the inclusion of an auditorium, fine arts students, cultural affinity groups and outside speakers would have a place to share their talents to a larger audience. It would allow clubs to sell more tickets for their events, therefore allowing them to expand their club with people and financially. The addition of study rooms would give students more space to gather to do group projects, which is especially important when library study rooms are in high demand, such as dead weeks, midterm and final weeks. Additionally, this center gives commuter students a place to gather and be in between classes, as sometimes it can be hard to find a space to be during the day.

These are the points we want our stakeholders to consider when making their decision. We want them to have not only the students' interest in mind, while also not having to sacrifice money.

Criteria Used to Select and Organize the Kit's Persuasive Tactics and Strategizing

One of the main standards we used to guide our choosing and organizing of the best persuasive tactics to include in our action kit was to ensure **advocacy** for student voice. Having a student center needs to ensure that every student feels welcome, which is why the opinions of the students at the University of Portland matter.

Upon researching all different potential stakeholders across the University of Portland, we understand that ASUP speaks strongly on behalf of the student body on campus. By hosting weekly meetings virtually, anyone is able to attend regardless of if they are on or off campus. There are opportunities for students to be involved as well as have a space to give a voice on something they believe in that is relevant to the UP community.

A second standard is **locality**. In order to ensure that we can create a space and environment that accurately reflects upon what is best suited for people who would use the student center, we must emphasize the importance of how easily we can get opinions and responses from everyone involved in the UP community. If you are to hold an open/public meeting, it is essential that it be held in a location that is accessible to most people. Since there is a high density of the student body that resides on campus and all classes are held on campus, it would only make sense to find that meetings are held on campus.

One main tactic we had was to **create spaces for open discussion**. Oftentimes there are booths set up outside of Clark Library. This is a prime location for all students as many are walking by during passing periods or even walking in and out of the library to begin or end their

study session. It keeps the location on campus and is present with the people who are heavily immersed in campus life and can allow the chance to hear from the voices of those who probably have the most experience of what happens on campus and between students attending the university.

Another tactic proposed is to create surveys that **provide incentive for students**. This could mean a chance to enter a raffle or even a gift card or some sort for every 10-15th submission they receive. ASUP surely does hold the budget to allocate some funding towards incentivising students to leave a response on their opinion. The benefits of surveys are that they are easily accessible and with certain specifications, we can narrow down the responses to students who are currently enrolled in classes for a certain time range that seems relevant to responses that are trying to be gathered.

Lastly, we propose **engaging opportunities that are student-centered and community-driven**. This is because not only will a student center be found beneficial for the students on campus, it will be a space that impacts the community of University of Portland. Whether this is a space for alumni to come back for more resources or places for faculty to conduct events centered towards their respective departments, it will be a continuous development of relationships and meaning-making. By creating engaging opportunities for all groups, you are creating the groups and relationships before the student center is even constructed. This will allow a smoother transition for all groups and communities to instead focus on understanding group dynamics, transfer over to how their group dynamics can be played out in the student center and how they can use the resources of the facility to enhance their relationships.

Best-fit Persuasive Tactics and Strategizing ‘Solutions’ with Justifications

A key tactic taken from communication that constitutes our final Action Kit will be **identity**. A focus will be drawn on the wide variety of identities that coexist on the Bluff and what it means for identities to work together and create meaning between one another.

Here at the University of Portland, we are fully aware of all the various cultures and identities found present among students, staff, faculty, etc. We have clubs of all sorts that find ways to support people who share similar beliefs, ideologies, cultural backgrounds, athletic interests, etc. But as of right now, everything is separated from each other. Clubs don't have a central location where they meet up. Meetings are held all across campus and there isn't a central hub where offices for clubs can exist. For incoming students, this can be incredibly hard to understand visually how many clubs do exist on campus and hard to find a way to join one if you just happened to miss the biannual club fair that takes place on campus. Promotion of a student center ensures that there is a location for where all identities can coexist in a space.

In a research performed by Sonia Roccas and Marilyn B. Brewer, one of their concluding statements found that, "Individuals who live in a multicultural society that embraces an integrationist ideology are likely to have more complex representations of their multiple identities than individuals who live in a monocultural or a stratified society." (Roccas & Brewer, 2002, p. 104). The university is made up of individuals that are connected to multiple cultures and we find that they actively engage in those cultures that they find available on and off campus. We come from different geographical locations across the world and having a space where identities can be openly shared between people can result in the creation of more meaningful relationships. The university can be a promoter of an institution that cultivates relationships and group-dynamics that are not only diverse but also give a voice to all identities and backgrounds.

Conclusions and Takeaways

In conclusion, a student center for the University of Portland is crucial in aiding the continuous growth of students and community. Through the donations of generous donors, including ASUP, a student center could have the capabilities to offer a space to every community on campus. From club meeting spaces to admissions, this center would allow students, staff and community members to come together. With the insight we have suggested, we believe we could effectively help those involved to complete this project in a timely manner.

References

- Accessible Education Services | University of Portland.* (n.d.). Accessible Education Services | University of Portland. <https://www.up.edu/aes/index.html>
- Associated Students of the University of Portland. “ASUP - About Us.” asuportland, University of Portland, <https://sites.google.com/view/asuportland/about-us>.
- Boul, B. (2017, April 1). Student Center(ed): Is the Student Union the Key to Retention? HMC Architects. Retrieved from <https://hmcarchitects.com/news/student-centered-student-union-key-retention/>
- Dong, A., & Meckey, M. (2023, March 15). St. Mary's as a Student Center. personal.
- Portland is the most sustainable city in the U.S., according to a new study.* (2022, August 9). <https://www.kptv.com/2022/08/09/portland-is-most-sustainable-city-us-according-new-study/>
- Roccas, S. & Brewer M. B. (2002). Social identity complexity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 6, 88–106.
- Sustainability & Social Responsibility | University of Portland.* (n.d.). Sustainability & Social Responsibility | University of Portland. <https://www.up.edu/sustainability/sustainability-social-responsibility.html>

Appendix:

Action Kit Description for UP Partner/Client

Yoshimi, April, Karel, Dia'ane



St. Mary's
Reimagined →

For the students, by the students

Establishing...

- Accessibility
- Sustainability
- Student-Centrism
- Community
- ...
- One STEP at a time

In collaboration with
**Associated Students
of the
University of Portland**

A student center is bursting with potential for creating dynamic, student-centric experiences that can build well-balanced students and promote a positive campus culture.

Brett Leavitt



The World Beyond Us



We are all members of a world bigger than our university. Our building is committed to:

- Renewable Energy
- Reducing, Reusing, Recycling
- Composting; straight from the bin to our garden
- Actively reducing our carbon footprint

What We're Doing:

Lets get this conversation started:

- Public meetings for student input
- Sending out surveys to members of our community
- Engagement activities; wielding the power of a unified community
- Amplifying YOUR voice



Interested in donating?
gofund.me/this-link-is-fake



What YOU can do?

"ASUP serves and represents all UP students by actively seeking opinions and encouraging participation"

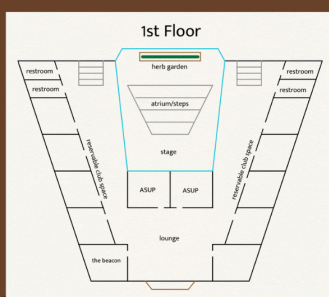
WE want to hear from YOU.
 What do you want to see?

Get in Touch!

asup@up.edu

<https://sites.google.com/view/asuportland/executive-board>

from the TOP



Accessibility, Community

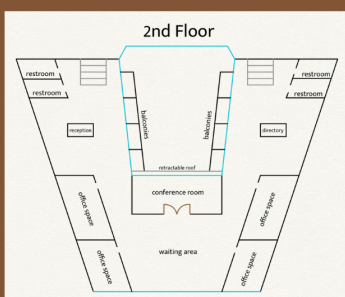
ASUP, the Beacon, & all your favorite clubs



step UP
 because talent is worth sharing

Accessibility, Student-Centered

Admissions, Financial Aid, & all the people you'll need



espresso UP

a new space for an old classic



Student-Centered, Community

Lounge, Coffee, & all the things you wanted for too long

