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AUTHOR	Butts, Porter
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ABSTRACT

In this speech, the author provides some guidelines covering student union construction for those administrators contemplating the construction of such a facility. The recommendations and information presented cover (1) the organization and functions of an official "union planning committee;" (2) a survey of local needs regarding facilities to be included; (3) the formulation of a controlling statement of purpose for the building; (4) the preparation of the building program; and (5) the project budget and its financing. (MLF)

A SEMINAR IN PLANNING AND BUILDING A COLLEGE UNION

ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGE UNIONS - INTERNATIONAL

CONFERENCE AT THE GREENBRIER, WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS, W. VA.

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College Union Building

"Getting the Project Under Way"

Paper presented by:

Porter Butts

Director of Development and

Professor of Social Education

The Wisconsin Union, University of Wisconsin

It used to be pretty tough to get a college administration, the faculty, the planning office, or even, sometimes, students interested in a union building. Now one appears almost automatically in the campus development plan. Almost every college and university -- large or small, urban or non-urban -- now feels a union is necessary. The question mainly is "When will we build it, and where do we get the money?"

But too often, I fear, the administration wants a union for the wrong, or partly wrong, reasons. Either the president has seen "one of those" and wants one, to keep pace in the race; or the campus planner or dean of students reminds everybody there has to be a place to eat; or everybody agrees there's an acute need for a new bookstore, or a place for students, especially commuters, to be some where between classes.

So the problem is now not so much one of selling the idea of <u>having</u> a new building as selling the idea of what a union might be.

No one can take too great exception, of course, to the suggestion that students, like everyone else, need to eat, that they have to buy books, and that they ought to have a place to get in out of the rain. And if this sells a union project, fine.

But before the college freezes on the concept of a union as a combination snack bar-cafeteria-bookstore, plus a few meeting rooms and offices, someone on the campus -- and usually it's the dean of students, business manager, director of development, or a group of student leaders -- ought to assemble a docket of information on

unions (there's lots of it, available from the central office of this Association) and go to the president, place on his desk, say, the little pamphlet called "College Unions -- Fifty Facts" and the Association manual on "Planning and Operating College Union Buildings," which dwells considerably on union purpose and planning approaches, and say: "To get this ball rolling in the best way, won't you appoint a planning committee to study out all our out-of-class needs and make recommendations?"

The president may think of this himself; a number have. But all too often the whole matter has been left in the hands of the business office; or an architect who has never seen a union is commanded to produce a preliminary scheme next month; or the planning or budget office devises some formula that defines what the building is going to be. And this doesn't mean the job will be done well.

So -- the first key step in planning -- whether a new building or an addition -- is the appointment of an official "Union Planning Committee."

The Planning Committee

(a) Functions: to organize a survey of needs for a union, analyze results, make facility, policy, and site recommendations to the president and trustees, and generally to serve as the clearing house and official agency in all planning.

(b) Appointment, if possible, should carry the approval of the trustees, so that the trustees become a partner in the enterprise from the beginning, and so the Committee is fully recognized as the official channel of communi-

cation and recommendation, clothed with genuine authority to act.

(c) Include key student, faculty, staff, and possibly alumni leaders on the Committee -- those in leadership positions in their own organizations or officially concerned with student welfare; those who may have a role in operating facilities; also some who have no vested interest in the building but who are known simply to have an understanding interest in student life. Sometimes advisable also to include an interested trustee. A faculty member is usually chairman.

As to size, there are two typical patterns:

(1) A single committee of 12 to 15 (the most common form of organization).

(2) An operating or executive committee of 5 to 7 plus an advisory committee of 20 to 30 representing all major groups which may be concerned with the union development.

(d) Make provision for an executive secretary or project administrator -- usually a paid staff member, often a person who will have a key union responsibility in the future (the union director himself if the project is an addition to an existing union) -- with time to serve as administrator of the survey; to act as liaison with architect, consultants, and administration; and to give the development

of the project in all its phases continuous attention. Union buildings do not happen as a result of committee meetings. They require a great deal of hard week-to-week administrative work. The staff member appointed should be free to devote about one-fourth to one-third of his time to preliminary planning; and when the project goes into the working drawing stage, one-half or more of his time.

(e) This is the time, also, to call in a consultant -- someone who has been in the middle of union planning and operations for a number of years and knows how to help -- so that the Committee has an informed person to turn to in testing out its ideas, in learning the realities of day-to-day union operation, and in shaping up a course of action.

(You know the definition of a consultant: "A well-paid expert brought in at the last minute to share the blame." If colleges would call in a consultant soon enough, there just might not be as much blame.)

The first task of the Committee, I would suggest, is to familiarize itself rather fully with the historic purposes and the present potentials of a union. The background readings are not hard to come by. For years this Association has been cranking out conference papers, monographs, and books designed to aid colleges in their union planning. The books and monographs are listed in the Association's "Publications List." Especially useful: Frank Noffke's

1965 monograph, Planning for a College Union. Innumerable special papers on purpose and planning can be found in the Association's Annotated Bibliography.

With background reading under its belt, the second task, I happen to believe, is to arrive at a controlling statement of purpose for the new building, or addition, so that all may have a common reference point, so that facilities may be chosen with full awareness of a total goal in view, and so that the basic functions of the building are understood by all -- including by the administration, trustees, and student body. For if the fundamental guiding purposes of the building can be agreed upon, many corollary decisions regarding what facilities to include, site selection, and other campus planning will more readily fall in place. Also, the architect is usually greatly helped in designing facilities and setting the tone of the building if he has confirmation of the overall goals of the project.

For example:

If the Committee accepts the concept of a union as the campus community center "for students, faculty, administration, alumni, and guests," as set forth in the Association's statement of purpose, this opens the door to consideration of facilities especially useful to faculty and visiting conference groups, even a conference center wing. And it implies, right off, that the building will not be called a "Student Union" or "Student Center."

If the Committee accepts the premise of the Association that the Union is not just a building, but represents a "well-considered plan

for the community life of the college," then it will not be inhibited in considering facilities which readily bring the members of the community together -- like theaters and auditoriums; or facilities which enrich community life -- like art galleries; or facilities which facilitate recreation programs outside the building -- like mini-unions on the other side of a large campus or in a married student housing complex, or like an outing equipment rental service, even an outing lodge at a nearby lake.

And if it agrees the union should be "part of the educational program," it will make a special effort to see that the union is more than a collection of miscellaneous service facilities and a place to get together. It will go beyond this and talk seriously about offices for program counselors, a library, music lounge, craft shop, and, again, theater and art gallery

Basic to all planning throughout, therefore, is the answer to this fundamental question: "Should the new or expanded union, in principle, be conceived as a general community center to meet rather fully the institution's out-of-class needs, present and future, or as a facility designed mainly to take care of the more pressing immediate service needs (i.e., expanded bookstore and food services; more meeting rooms) -- essentially a supplement to cultural, social, and service facilities in other buildings?"

The answer most other colleges, here and abroad, have arrived at after careful study has been to design the union as the major focal center of campus life and activity outside the classroom.

Every Australian union is of this kind, as are the newer British unions and the unions in Canada. And, of course -- to date at least -- the union as the campus community center is the basic concept in the U.S., borne of the belief that providing a general common meeting ground is the way you get the maximum interaction among the otherwise insular segments of the campus population and gain some semblance of unity (the reason for the name "union"), and the belief that in coming for one activity to a union which embraces the arts and social recreation as well as services, students will be exposed to, and perhaps inspired by, another activity.

The reasons underlying the community center concept, of course, are not only philosophic; they are also economic. It is far less expensive to provide one major center than several smaller ones -- in construction cost, and in operating cost -- and it is far more effective (and feasible) to have one supervising staff.

Now I am aware, as you probably are, that some are questioning this centralization of community services and programs. A widely published report from Wayne State University, Detroit, for example, says: "The Wayne plan rejects the notion of a single architectural utopia . . . The classic union building -- a monolithic structure that is intended to be all things to all students -- is no solution." And then the report goes on to advocate a series of "outposts" in scattered locations, small gathering places along campus or nearby commercial streets, and classroom building lounges or "hangouts" -- where students can rest between or after classes, get light snacks,

study, play a game of table tennis, and wait for the bus.

I draw special attention to all this because, the way Wayne State puts it, you don't need a union at all -- and that would seem to raise a rather fundamental question for a seminar on planning a union.

It seems to me somebody at Wayne State hasn't heard what a union is. They're talking about washrooms, hamburgers, places to study, and bus stops. I have no quarrel with dispersing these; of course you don't put all the campus washrooms,vending machines, study tables, and bus stations in the union. You install them where people are; you make conveniences convenient. But you still haven't come anywhere near doing what a union does, or can do.

What about students who want more than a snack day after day? What about group gatherings, large and small, that need catered food service? What about rooms for meetings everybody can readily find? What about the large assembly places every campus needs -- social-banquet hall, auditorium? What about student interaction with the faculty -- and special provisions for faculty and conference groups? What about a well-conceived social-cultural-recreation program, and a place for program staff and student committees to operate? What about a central place where students can find each other, broaden their acquaintanceships, meet the other girls they might marry? What about the union as a "unifying force," enlarging the student's sense of belonging to something more than a street outpost or classroom lounge?

As always, in a case like this, it helps to know what students themselves want. At one large university of 15,000 students, mostly commuters as at Wayne, for years there have been 7 snack bars, numerous classroom "common rooms" or lounges, a handsome club building for graduate students, and an old vestigial union. In a survey of needs 1564 students were asked what campus facility they would "use the most" at various times of the day -- an existing nearby classroom lounge, an existing nearby snack bar, or a new central union? Except for the period between classes, when time is limited and distances are important, two-thirds of all students, including a majority of the graduate students, said they would use the new central union the most. This is not too surprising; on almost every campus, of whatever kind, students stress as their number one need "a central place to get together."

And what about the cost of multiple small units? In a recent issue of the Association Bulletin you'll find a story about the University of North Carolina, which has numerous snack bars spread around the campus, including one at the union, in which the vice chancellor acknowledges that these numerous snack bars constitute one of the main reasons for spectacular deficits in the campus food service operations.

The Wayne State report proposes its "outposts" be about 3000 sq.ft., to accommodate some 85 students. That's 35 sq.ft. per student. 85 students can't do very much in 3000 sq.ft. except sit in the same room together. In an ample central union the space provision

would be about half of 35 sq.ft. per student, ergo, half the cost per student; and the student would have at his elbow all the wide-ranging services, recreation, arts facilities, and meeting and dining options a general community center offers.

So -- there is good reason for a Planning Committee not to theorize all by itself, or put aside too hastily the accumulated experience of many years and many places in arranging for the out-of-class needs of a campus population, or overlook what its own students say they need and want.

This brings us to the survey of local needs. A careful survey is an indispensable part of sound planning. Takes time, but saves time and money and mistakes in the long run.

Survey of Needs

There are at least three main components of a good survey: (1) identifying, once the Committee has formulated its controlling statement of purpose, the special local factors affecting planning and requiring policy determination; (2) gathering all possible factual data bearing upon physical planning; and(3) going to students and faculty to get their statements of individual needs and wants.

First, with regard to individual needs:

It is far from easy to determine, without error, what facilities should be included in a new union or addition and at what size. But attempting to do so is at least as important as it is difficult. For the answers which are finally embodied in the architectural plans will be frozen in steel and concrete. Errors are expensive and not easy to rectify.

Students and student organizations themselves are a source of information of key importance. Their needs, wants, opinions, and habits should be studied intently and revealed as clearly as possible or you may have a white, or partly white, elephant on your hands.

Although students, like the rest of us, are admittedly less than perfect in their ability to express their needs, there is nevertheless no better source for this information. A Planning Committee cannot speak adequately for a whole student body. Student and faculty leaders often have quite a different idea and preference than the average student.

Even though the answers students give may not surprise anyone familiar with the local situation over a period of years (though often they do), the college is greatly aided in determining how much emphasis to give which facilities. And the public relations benefit of going to students for their assistance in determining what should be in the union is of great value. It notifies students that action is under way; it arouses new interest and support for the project; helps pave the way for student understanding of union potentialities and acceptance of a union fee; and helps avoid student criticism of how the union is planned.

A good needs survey helps everyone in determining more closely the nature, size, and cost of the project; and this enables the architect to proceed more rapidly and surely, and makes the whole project tangible and realistic for the administration, trustees, and prospective donors or financing agencies.

Moreover, I know of no better way to resolve conflicts of opinion or deadlocks over whether or not to include certain facilities than to produce the evidence of what a large majority of students and faculty will, or will not, support.

How do you go about conducting this part of the survey?

If you are unsure, this is the time to call in again as consultant a union director who has been through the mill and knows what the pitfalls are.

There <u>are</u> pitfalls -- like asking a student to rate 20 or 30 facilities 1, 2, 3 in order of importance. How can anyone decide that a Checkroom is exactly 14th and Billiards 15th? Or, like asking a student to say only what three facilities are most important and what three least important, revealing nothing about all those facilities in between? And certainly I don't think you want to go the route one well-known firm of "educational consultants" goes -- asking one individual or group merely to check a list of possible functions -- "formal dances," "between-meal snacks," "fraternity meetings," "bowling," etc., etc. -- and then put down the number of sq.ft. of floor area "required" for "Ballroom," "Bedrooms," "Bowling Alley," "Coatcheck Room," etc. -- to "guide the architect in his work." A kind of grocery list you make up just before you go to market. Except that in the case of a grocery list you can put down four cans of tomatoes and know you're about right for your family for the next two weeks; whereas very few people have the slightest idea what number of sq.ft. to put down for 8 bowling lanes or 12, or whether they ought to have 8, or 12, or any, in the first place.

All these kinds of approaches ask the person checking the list, in effect, to plan the building for everybody -- and he's not a planner. You don't learn anything about what he as an individual needs and will use, which is what you most need to know.

What I think you want to do is go to a representative, fully random sample of the campus population and ask each person not what he thinks is a good idea -- maybe for somebody else -- but what he personally has a need for and will use, and how often. And be sure to let him say he isn't interested in a given facility, or just doesn't have any opinion, if he wants to. This produces a quite different result -- and you can run it all through a punch card machine and get a composite picture of positive support, or negative, and about how many people are potential users of each facility.

What facilities to ask about? Your committee and consultant will know once you've developed your controlling concept and learned the answers to certain policy questions you will have already raised with the administration.

The facilities to be especially cautious about are listed in the Association manual on Planning.

There are perhaps a hundred kinds of facilities to be found in all unions taken together. But there's not much point in asking a student to react to a facility that doesn't fit your union purpose, or, from the standpoint of college policy or budget or site limitations, is clearly not possible of attainment -- like, say, a beer bar or a swimming pool. This just adds up to extra tabulation work and falsely aroused hopes.

Some facilities, however, I wouldn't overlook. There are about 30 facilities known to be the ones most generally wanted by students, as shown by surveys among some 35,000 students conducted at 37 institutions of all kinds and sizes in the same way over a period of almost two decades. The following table lists these facilities in ranked order according to positive support accorded by students; and the outcome in the 1960's is compared with the outcome in the '50's to illustrate shifts of student interest, if any. This is not to suggest that these are the facilities to include in your building, or addition; it is only to say "Here are facilities, among others, probably worth asking your students about in a survey."

The changes in student response, as between the 50's and 60's deserve a few comments. (Informal discussion of the more significant changes.)

THE 30 UNION FACILITIES MOST WANTED BY STUDENTS AT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES OF ALL KINDS AND SIZES

(Based upon a 10-15% random sampling of full time day students)

Facility	In 1962-70 (Surveys at 11 institutions involving 13,529 students)		In 1952-62 (Surveys at 26 institutions involving 21,136 students)		Change in weighted scores from 1950's to 1960's
	Rank (according to composite weighted score)	Weighted Score* (100 if all students regarded facility essential)	Rank (according to composite weighted score)	Weighted Score* (100 if all students regarded facility essential)	
Snack Bar	1	83.8	1	86.5	-2.7 points
Bookstore	2	81.7	2	77.5	+4.2
General Lounge	3	73.3	3	77.1	-3.8
Coffee House	4	71.8	(not included in surveys)		--
Parking near Union	5	71.4	8	64.1	+8.3
Cafeteria	6	70.1	6	67.5	+2.6
Ballroom	7	66.9	4	74.0	-7.1
Theater	8	66.7	5	67.8	-1.1
Information Desk	9	66.5	7	64.8	+1.7
Patio (outdoor lounging, dining)	10	59.5	14	58.5	+1.0
Small Auditorium	11	58.4	10	60.8	-2.4
Browsing Library	12	57.0	12	59.3	-2.3

*Weight of 2 if student checked "I would use frequently; facility means a great deal to me;" weight of 1 if student checked "I would use from time to time but other facilities are more important;" weight of 0 if student checked "I do not need personally; I would use rarely or not at all." ("No opinion" responses omitted from weighting.)

Facility	In 1962-70 Rank	In 1962-70 Score	In 1952-62 Rank	In 1952-62 Score	Change in Score
Meeting Rooms	13	56.2	13	58.6	-2.4
Party Room	14	54.6	15	58.4	-3.8
Person-to-Person Communication Area (message center, inter-viewing,selling)	15	53.9	(not included in surveys)		--
Music Lounge	16	53.4	11	60.4	-7.0
Television Area	17	49.8	16	54.8	-5.0
Bowling	18	48.1	9	61.0	-12.9
Art Gallery	19	46.9	24	41.1	+5.8
Billiards	20	42.8	22	42.9	-0.1
Outing Quarters	21	42.2	26	37.3	+4.9
Post Office	22	41.7	18	49.2	-7.5
Table Tennis	23	41.1	17	54.1	-13.0
Checkroom	24	39.2	23	41.4	-2.2
Kitchenette (self-prepared refreshments)	25	39.1	20	45.2	-6.1
Priv.Cafe.Dining (tray service)	26	38.4	21	44.4	-6.0
Cards, Chess	27	38.3	19	46.0	-7.7
Quiet Room (with cots, for rest)	28	32.4	28	31.9	+0.5
Individual Lockers	29	31.2	30	28.2	+3.0
Private Dining Waiter service)	30	30.9	25	37.7	-6.8
Barber Shop	31	28.6	27	32.5	-3.9
Craft Shop	32	25.5	29	31.3	-5.8

What facilities students want in a union, and what actually gets built, can be two quite different things.

The next table shows what facilities, in the latest nation-wide survey conducted by the Association of College Unions (in 1963)*, appeared in more than 50% of existing unions at institutions large and small, public and private, liberal arts and professional, urban and non-urban, taken together. There may well have been substantial changes, of course, since 1963.

THE MOST COMMONLY ADOPTED UNION FACILITIES

Facility	% of Existing Unions (in 1963) Providing Facility
Offices for Student Organizations	95%
Committee Rooms	91
Snack Bar	89
Information Desk	87
Cafeteria	84
Television Area	83
General Lounge	82
Table Tennis	82
Meeting Rooms	79
Billiards	79
Ballroom	72
Music Listening Room	70
Coat Room	67
Parking Adjacent to Union	61
Poster-making Room	59
Bookstore	59
Card-playing Area	57
Private Dining Rooms	56
Ticket Selling Office	52
Art Display Area	50

As you can see, there are some interesting differences in these two facility listings and in the priorities that seem to emerge; and one can wonder about them. But at least it is useful to know what facilities actually have been most commonly adopted, such a listing

*Bell, Boris, Administration and Operation of College Unions, Association of College Unions - International, Palo Alto, Calif. 1965

providing another kind of partial consensus that can serve as a reference point.

Now what you need on your campus, and what the response of your students may turn out to be, could be considerably at variance with what you find in either of these tabulations. But that's what you want to find out.

There are, of course, other ways of developing the picture of what students want of a union building. Personal interviews, for example -- including the approach by a Los Angeles architectural firm, funded by a grant from the Educational Facilities Laboratories, in which a series of interviews with statistically selected samples of all groups of students focused on the goals of the individual and the strains he encounters in accomplishing these goals, plus observation of actual behavior patterns, using social-psychological measurements to determine how the new building might make it easier for him to achieve his goals.

But this can be time-consuming and costly. Most institutions have administered their surveys by handing out questionnaires simultaneously in selected large classes which cover a representative cross section of the student body, aiming to obtain a response from at least 10-15% of the student population.

Involving more than 15% would be deliberately for public relations and promotional purposes, recognizing that extra work is involved in tallying extra responses that are not likely to be materially different from the results of a good 10-15% sampling.

Highly desirable to obtain the services of a faculty member who is experienced in statistical method, to assist in setting up the whole procedure, selecting classes that cover a representative cross section of liberal arts and professional courses, men and women, all classes (freshmen through graduate students), etc.

I would suggest the survey not be preceded by newspaper or other discussion of possible facilities since it is the spontaneous, unconditioned response of the student that is wanted.

While a needs survey of this kind can be a primary factor in arriving at a recommended list of facilities, aid in sizing facilities, and settle many doubts, it is not the only basis for decision. There are important qualifying considerations to be kept in mind.

Where students are confronted by suggested facilities with which they have had as yet little or no personal experience, many are likely to register indifference. Surveys commonly show that students want most what they have already used on the campus and found inadequate (i.e., Bookstore, Snack Bar, Parking), or what they already have had some familiarity with elsewhere. On the other hand, some say yes to a listed facility simply because it sounds all right. It is here one needs to draw upon the experience of other generally comparable campuses where the facilities in question have been tried, adopting the definite successes and discarding the failures.

In general, young people are likely to be optimistic in their

support of union-type facilities, and despite the instructions in the questionnaire both students and faculty are inclined in some cases to check facilities they believe would be "good for someone else." But they do this for almost all types of facilities, so that while the personal need for facilities may be overstated, the relationship of facilities to each other in the rankings remain significant, and affords a basis for determining broadly where to place the emphasis in planning.

Another basic source of information required in developing a proposed facility list is the fund of technical and administrative facts which inevitably clothe any such project as this. Questions of enrollment growth, financing, site conditions, long range campus development plan, college policy, what organizations will use the building and how, what the social and cultural programs in the building will be, and who shall do what, must all be taken in account. (A rather full discussion of these factors can be found in Noffke's Planning for a College Union.) So you go to the people who may know the answers and learn all you can.

Lastly, while the building program itself will spring from the needs and desires of the people of the campus community, who will be the users of the facilities, the supervisory and administrative problems are of almost equal importance. A multiple-purpose community building must mean many things to many people at the same time; the staff will face a continual stream of operational problems including scheduling of facilities, distribution of supplies, super-

vision of activities, special services to groups of users, direction of personnel, housekeeping, etc.

Good union design must, therefore, not only provide the right facilities, but also place them on the right floor and arrange them in relation to one another so that operationally the building functions with maximum convenience and effectiveness.

The necessity for coordinating these sources of information and integrating the evidences from each is perhaps obvious. Sometimes minimized or overlooked, however, is the importance of students understanding the reasons for any departures from the pattern of their express desires or hopes which the Planning Committee may find it essential to impose. The only effective way to accomplish this is to include student participation at all planning stages, and to keep the student body fully informed, step by step, of the planning as it proceeds. Not only do students need a new union; they need also to know that it is theirs, and that it is a direct reflection of their needs and wants.

And it is important that the trustees and any others who may have a responsibility for <u>funding</u> and approving the project be kept fully informed as planning progresses so that they, in turn, can keep the Planning Committee advised of any probable financial or other limitations which may govern the scope of the planning. Or you may find you've done much of your work in vain.

Preparation of the Building Program

Out of the stated individual preferences of the future users of the building, out of a fact survey of the needs of the organizations which are to meet, dine, dance, or use office space, and out of the policy decisions as to how the building is to serve the campus should develop the Building Program. It should be a carefully worked out, descriptive document, which may run anywhere from 100 to 200 pages.

A facility list by itself is not enough. How often we see "building programs" which, like the grocery list of the consulting firm I showed you, sets forth a column of items reading "Snack Bar (with atmosphere), Bookstore (much larger than at present), 4 or 5 meeting rooms (various sizes), Ballroom (to be used also for banquets), several Student Offices," etc., etc. These may indeed be the facilities you want to build. But the administration and trustees will rightly want to be sure there is convincing justification of need. The architect will need to know much about size, capacity, the function of each facility, and how facilities should relate to each other before he can start work. So you need a Building Program which interprets the findings of the survey, sets forth "minimum" and "preferred" areas, the functions and technical requirements of each facility, possibilities of multiple-use, desirable facility relationships, and the operating policies in view. As Gyo Obata, St. Louis architect, said in a seminar on campus planning, "The best way to make up a building program is to describe all the ways the building will be used."

This becomes a basic reference document, to be reviewed, refined, and ultimately approved by the Planning Committee, administration, and trustees. Such Building Program is virtually indispensable to the architect in setting the basic scheme, making cost estimates, and proceeding with detailed planning without extensive research of his own and without great uncertainty and delay.

The importance of getting official approval of the Building Program can not be over-emphasized. This step of having the administration and trustees take explicit action to approve the scope and nature of the project (by approving the Program) before drawings start is absolutely vital, or there will be no firm ground on which to base further planning. Changes may be proposed frequently by changing college personnel, or the whole concept of the project remain in doubt, seriously delaying progress all along the line. Too many architects have stacks of discarded preliminary drawings, because somebody changed his mind -- not about the drawings but about the program. This is very frustrating, and very costly.

At some point, as Obata says, "The Program should be reduced to writing and solemnly agreed upon by all concerned."

I haven't said anything about visiting other college unions to get ideas. There is value, of course, as our Association manual says, in learning what other unions are like and what facilities and programs seem to be popular and profitable -- value, that is,

in gaining a useful frame of reference. Just try to be sure the observations and information accruing from such visits are intelligently sifted and applied to the local circumstances. All too often these visits result in copying mistakes which were in turn copied from someone else's mistakes. Or the Committee freezes on a facility that looks good, and may indeed be quite good for the campus visited, but really isn't right at all for the home campus. Or the host who tours you through the building doesn't tell you fully, or doesn't have time to tell you, what's wrong. Or, as so often is necessary, the Committee visits only unions relatively nearby and misses completely the buildings which, indeed, could offer promising answers.

So visitations are something, like examining other union blueprints, to approach with caution. The director of planning at Brigham Young University advises that the architect and members of the Committee visit other campuses after a tentative Building Program has been drafted, so they know what they're looking for, the trip thus becoming more meaningful.

The Project Budget; Financing

Now, how about a building budget and financing? The Planning Committee will do well to find out early whether it has to start with a dollar sum the college thinks it can handle and work backwards to see what can be built within that figure, or whether the building budget, within reason, can grow out of demonstrated needs.

The latter approach, of course, is far the best. Avoid, if you can possibly do it, establishing a dollar budget, and hence the scope of the project, too early. Time after time, at the beginning, someone pulls a figure out of a hat and tells the trustees; or a state planning office sets a budget based upon some mysterious formula of its own; or a legislature authorizes borrowing at a given dollar sum -- and that's it. Then the Planning Committee goes to work, finds out what a union really ought to be, wants badly to include a small theater, an art gallery, or enough meeting rooms to make the union function as a conference center -- but it's too late. The already-approved budget isn't big enough.

Sometimes the original figure is fairly adequate, but then in the three or four years it takes to put the project out for bids inflation does its work, interest rates go up, and the college finds it can build only three-quarters of the space it thought it could. Or the college decides it wants to put a 20,000 sq.ft. bookstore in the union after all, or enrollment unexpectedly shoots up requiring food services twice as large -- and all, or most, of the cultural and recreational facilities go out the window.

So -- keep the building budget open until the needs surveys have been made and the Program written, if you possibly can.

Whether all the facilities that are wanted can be, or should be, built at the outset is another matter.

Union building development, more often than not, is a development in stages -- mainly because of initial fund limitations, though

sometimes because of doubt concerning the size or need for one or more units until other college developments take place, or because it is uneconomical to operate a plant designed for, say, a future enrollment of 8000 students during the interim when there are only 5000 students.

Obviously, when several units of a project can be constructed at one time, there are substantial savings in cost, as compared to building the same units in stages; and if the needs are clear and the initial funds sufficient, this is sometimes the wisest course (though such construction savings may be largely offset by the greater expense of amortizing and maintaining the larger plant until enrollment expands and the building is more fully supported by more fees and by the income generated by increased use).

By and large, construction in stages has seemed the more practical course, providing the initial facilities are located so they can be well integrated with future units and are themselves of sufficient size so that they won't be overcrowded and require expansion two or three years after the building opens.

The important thing is to anticipate broadly at the outset the basic kinds of facilities and areas which will be needed to give the college a complete center -- ultimately, if not immediately -- so that a plan can be drawn initially which will allow for the proper siting of the first units and for orderly growth as the college grows. Sometimes this is done by designing for a complex of somewhat separated buildings interconnected by breezeways, or by designing

explicitly for wing extensions (or upper floors) of the initial structure. In either case the future circulation between units needs to be carefully anticipated so that the total of the present and future facilities functions as one integrated center -- for maximum convenience to users, savings in administrative overhead, housekeeping, and utility services, and avoidance of the costs of duplicating such supporting auxiliaries as delivery roads and docks, major entry facilities, administrative offices, etc.

In any case, even though funds become available for what is presumed to be a complete center, I would recommend that possibilities of expansion be considered basic. No one has the last word on what the college may want the union to be and do 20 years from now, or even 10.

An important lesson from the universal experience of existing unions is that these centers need to grow to meet unanticipated uses and demands. A building design is not right that is final and cannot readily be added to later. Most unions have had to build at least one addition -- some as many as six; some buildings are now twice to five times as large as when they opened.

Now it is easy to say this, and everybody seems to agree with it. But when it comes right down to reality, the campus planners frequently just don't allow enough site area for expansion, or the architect turns in a scheme he wants which is as tight in design as a basketball, one that can't be added to at any point around the perimeter. It happens time after time. In some cases, after only

three or four years, a college has had to abandon the original building and start over in a new location.

What this suggests is that when the architect submits his schemes, somebody has to be tough and insist upon a scheme that shows where and how the building can be expanded.

As to financing, where do you get the money to build a union? I think most of you know the answers, or your college business managers so -- (a) federal housing direct loan at 3%, or interest subsidy covering the difference between 3% and what the college has to pay in the commercial money market (if you can get on the list in time and get approved); (b) revenue bond issue, especially for state and municipal tax exempt institutions, with the interest rates now running 4½ to 5½%; large single gifts (still in the picture); state or municipal appropriations (sometimes*); general subscription campaigns among alumni, faculty, and friends (still harder to come by); in the case especially of additions, surpluses from union and/or bookstore operations; accumulations of union student fees assessed before construction starts (sometimes for as long as 20-30 years); and, in a few cases, the sale to the university or state of an old union built by gifts or student fees.

How do you construct the building budget -- project the dollar

*In a survey by the U.S.Office of Education, state institutions planning unions for the period 1965-70 reported they expected 29% of the funds to come from state appropriations. How many expectations were realized has not been reported.

sum you need?

This is a toughy -- because local costs vary so widely and change so rapidly. You start, of course, with the best estimates you can get for local costs per sq.ft. of construction of the union kind, and then apply this unit cost to the number of gross sq.ft. you hope to build. (I've seen cases where the Planning Committee applied the unit cost to its own areas of net, assignable sq.ft., forgetting the architect adds 45-50% of net area for walls, circulation, utility rooms, and other non-assignable areas -- and, hence, was short more than 30% from the beginning.)

Then you add to this basic cost of "construction only" a percentage of such cost for architect's fees (usually 6%, sometimes 5% in the south, and sometimes 7% or 8% where high AIA fee schedules prevail, or special engineering, acoustical, or food and/or bookstore consultant fees are to be included); and a percentage for furniture and equipment (which may run 20-25% of construction cost, depending on the extent and quality of the food service equipment -- which can be a very big item).

Most budget-makers remember to include these costs. But they often forget to allow for interest during construction, bond counsel, and other administrative costs, which may run 4 to 5% of construction cost; site development and landscaping which, depending on local policy as to who pays for what, may add up to 1 or 1½% of construction cost; and forget even the usual contingency of 5% which most architects recommend.

And particularly they forget to take into account the escalation in construction costs -- which these days can be the most serious oversight of all. Some architects report that building costs right now are still increasing at the rate of about 1% a month, or 10-12% a year, and that the rise is likely to continue at the rate of ½% per month after July, '71.

Let's backtrack a moment to cover what union construction costs have actually turned out to be this past year or so. You pick a cost figure per sq.ft. between $22 and $50, construction only, and somebody has probably built at that figure.

Adams State College in Colorado built at $22 per sq.ft.; Towson State at Baltimore at $25.24; the University of Wisconsin at $27.30; Wagner College, New York City, at $35; State University College, Plattsburgh, N.Y. $34; Kent State, Ohio, $45.

Geographical locations and local labor markets don't wholly account for the differences. As Secretary Berry reported in one of his newsletters, two California unions were recently bid at about the same time, one at $25 per sq.ft. and another, 200 miles away, at $51. So the design, quality of materials, bidding competition, or lack of it, and all sorts of peculiar local circumstances make a difference.

One of the measures more and more planners are taking, to be as sure as they can be, is to ask a professional estimator to take the building program, outline specifications, and preliminary sketches (if possible) and do a quantity take-off estimate. This helps.

If you haven't got any specifications or drawings, a more generalized guidline which you might find useful would be to start with the basic unit cost the U.S. Department of Housing currently considers it fair to allow in support of a union loan -- $36 per gross sq.ft. (which includes construction, fees, site work, and interest during construction, but not furnishings and moveable equipment). With fees, site work, and interest during construction amounting to about 10% of construction cost, this means the federal department figures about $32.72 represents,on average, a fair allowance for construction only. Then adjust this unit cost according to the department's "Relative Construction Cost Index" for geographic locations, which may result in adjustments upward or downward by as much as 25%.

Then take a look at what this index, plus the rate of building cost escalation, may do to your building budget. For example, if you're building in Cincinnati, add 12% to HUD's basic unit cost of $32.72 for construction only. You have $36.65 per sq.ft. Then, if you aren't planning to go to bid for another year, add at least 10% more. You come out at $40.32 per sq.ft.

You can see what this does to a union budget of, say, $4 million for construction only that didn't take these factors into account. You either have to find about 20% more money, or around $800,000 more for construction only -- not to mention more for fees, interest, furnishings, etc., which would take the extra cost up to about $1 million -- or knock out about a fourth of the facilities you planned.

You see, I think, why it's vital not to get frozen with a specific dollar budget authorization too early, why it's vital to have the very best cost estimates in hand when you do ask for budget approval, and why, in this time of spectacularly increasing building costs, it's vital to shorten the planning period.

There are numbers of ways to condense the time between the original decision to plan a union and bidding the project, including (a) getting the administration, somehow, to act on the Building Program when it's submitted -- not six months later -- and to agree that once approved, that's it -- and not open the door to doing the plans over because a new dean arrives; and then (b) finding an architectural firm that is ready to go to work, and stay at work.

But probably more important than anything else is the recommendation any consultant or union director who has been through it all will make: get a project administrator, or union director, on the job at the outset to keep the planning wheels turning. The administration usually balks at this, because it may cost $10,000 to $15,000 of somebody's budget. But if that person can shorten the planning period by a year, which he can, and thus save 10% cost escalation on, say, a $5 million project -- or $500,000 -- this ought to seem worthwhile.

The institutions which have taken the step now wonder how they could have ever managed to get their unions built and operating without his effort. But there are many union projects which have laid on the shelf or been kicked around for four or five years, though there was a Planning Committee and funds were available, simply be-

cause there was no one to take charge.

I am passing up a discussion of site as it affects early planning because of time. But there's a very good article on site selection by Ernie Christensen in the April, 1970, issue of the Association Bulletin. Just two or three do's and don'ts:

Do make sure the site is big enough for the inevitable building expansion to come. There are far too many cases where union construction had to start over in a new location, or a branch union built, after a few years because the original site didn't permit growth.

Do find out at the beginning if the proposed site is on tidewater land or has hard rock three feet below the surface, or the main campus heating tunnel runs through the middle of the site -- and therefore you can't have a basement.

Local idiosyncracies of these kinds can make all the difference in the world in how you plan the building-- and may even dictate another site.

Don't change the site after the building program is approved and the architect starts work. This can mean a whole new re-working of the program -- and certainly drawings -- and months and months of delay.

Don't let the site location become a public issue. Some union projects have been hung up for two or three years while alumni, faculty, students, and planners battled their way through a raging controversy. And you know what that can cost, at a 6 to 10% building price increase per year.