

a look at
welcome
week

The role of college unions and student activities in welcoming students

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about the trip

Members of the ACUI Central Office staff went on the road on Aug. 18–24, 2011, making stops at 20 institutions in six states during the course of seven days.

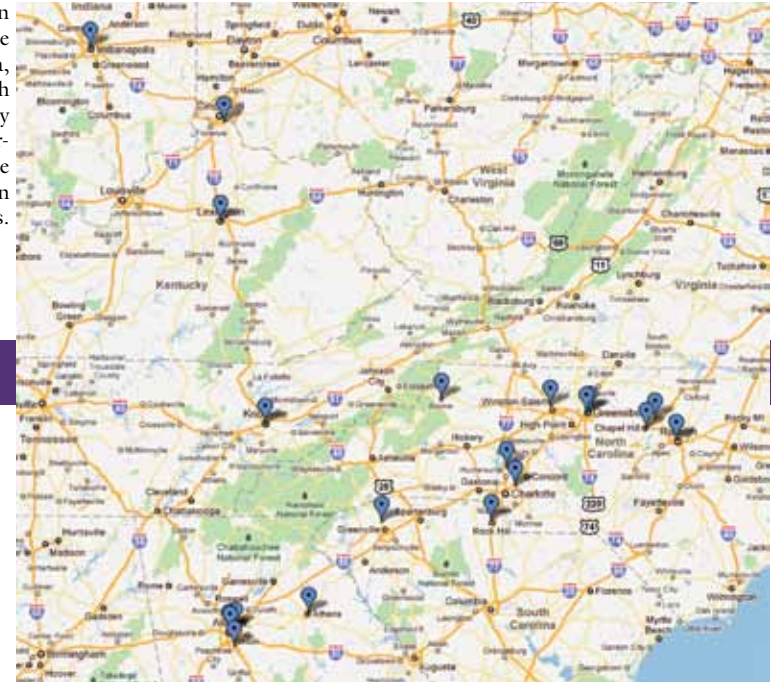
The ACUI Campus Tour: Welcome Week 2011 included visits with college union and student activities staff and students at a variety of institution types with a range of organizational models.

Key trends observed about the role of the unions and activities during those first weeks of the year:

- Host events that will draw students into the union
- Introduce students to ways of getting involved in campus life
- Serve as a hub of information for students and other members of the campus community
- Provide needed services for students
- Play a role in the coordinating and hosting of orientation and welcome events
- Recruit and train student employees that will serve as ambassadors for the union

These trends will be presented throughout this publication.

This map shows the location of the institutions visited during the road trip. In order, stops included: Georgia Institute of Technology, Clayton State University, Georgia State University, Emory University, University of Georgia, Furman University, Winthrop University, Davidson College, University of North Carolina–Charlotte, North Carolina State University, Duke University, University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill, North Carolina A&T State University, University of North Carolina–Greensboro, Wake Forest University, Appalachian State University, University of Tennessee–Knoxville, University of Kentucky, Northern Kentucky University, and Indiana University–Purdue University–Indianapolis.



This photo is a snapshot of the traveling ACUI Central Office employees with their gracious hosts at each stop.

the Role of the

College Union

The Association's Role of the College Union statement defines the union as the community center of the college that represents a well-considered plan for the community life of the college. Discussions with students and professionals yielded a variety of perspectives about how the role of the college union looks on campus.

Chelsie Sumner, who was serving as the union board president at Davidson College, said, "Knowing you are surrounded by familiar faces can be comforting in those first weeks back to school. Students associate the union as being a crucial part of their college experience. The layout of Davidson's Union includes a three-story open atrium so everyone feels like they are part of something bigger."

At Indiana University-Purdue University-Indianapolis, "the Campus Center gives those that commute a place to come to between classes, study, and get their basic needs met," said Michael Sprinkle, assistant director of events and conference services. Because orientation and registration processes happen within this facility, it helps establish the Campus Center as their "living room."

"When new students come to campus, they come here for all their needs, and this is where they begin their college journey," Sprinkle said.

It is important that **students see and experience** the student center and begin to view it as **the place where the community gathers** and student life happens.

The important role of facilities and programs being part of that initial introduction to campus life is not unique to commuter institutions. At Georgia Institute of Technology, all students participating in admissions visits and orientation events spend a significant amount of time in the Student Center.

“It is important that students see and experience the Student Center and begin to view it as the place where the community gathers and student life happens at Georgia Tech,” said Kim Harrington-Pete, acting director.

Students experience both formal sessions, like hearing from the dean of students, and social events, such as bowling and dancing, within the Student Center. Additionally, staff plays a role by serving on campus-wide committees related to welcome week so that the facility can “offer programs and activities that aid in the initial transition and general ‘welcome home’ feel of campus,” Harrington-Pete said.

At the University of North Carolina–Charlotte, recently opening a Student Union has created a new sense of community on campus.

“The old facility, the Cone Center, functioned more as a campus center with less emphasis on students than what occurs in the new building,” said Jerry Mann, executive director. “From the day we

opened our doors, we’ve seen a cultural shift in the students on campus who have come to embrace the Student Union as their own. Indeed, as our campus grows this building will be seen as the tipping point for the place the university will eventually become.”

Mann attributed this to two things: “The layout of the building and its ambience encourage hanging out in our major public area”; and second, “our activities division hosts events throughout the first weekend and week of school to draw students into the building where they can then meet other members of the community.”

The slate of welcome week programs at the University of Tennessee–Knoxville presented some additional insights about the role of activities in new students’ transition to college.

Ashleigh Moyer, director of student activities, described how the schedule was focused intentionally on events that required attendees to interact with each other—service opportunities, book discussions, information and organization recruitment fairs, outdoor trips, group recreation and leisure activities, etc. More passive programs such as movies and concerts were not featured so that students would spend their first days engaged in opportunities to meet new people.

the

PLACE

to be

Welcome week is a time when activities around campus abound. And before welcome week even kicks off at any campus, first-year students have already been introduced to the institution through orientation. Hundreds of events, thousands of students, and one location is the place to be: the union.

Orientation

College unions are a popular venue for orientation activities. The ability to offer meeting rooms and other services, such as dining options, make it an ideal location to host large groups of students for an extended period of time.

While the union may be a convenient location for the new student programs to be hosted, it also provides an opportunity to connect with students during their first on-campus experiences.

The Student Center at the University of Kentucky hosted 72 orientation events this past year.

“Hosting these events gets the students engaged on campus the right way,” said Ashley Casteel, assistant director, event management. “It allows us to introduce the students to the Student Center

facilities. Most will use the building throughout their college career for classes, meetings, bookstore, and dining.”

Additional orientation-related events at the Student Center included the multicultural first-year program as well as academic-based orientations for different schools.

Indiana University-Purdue University–Indianapolis Campus Center Assistant Director Michael Sprinkle reported that around 5,000 students come through the Campus Center at each year for orientation (including all semesters). These numbers give confirmation that the union has the ability to connect with students from their first moment on campus.

Educational and informational events

During welcome week, not all events are fun and games. First-year students often are required or have the option to attend educational and information meetings regarding safety, academics, budgeting, and more.

Director of the Memorial Student Union at North Carolina A&T State University Carl Baker said that more than 3,400 students were brought through the doors of the building during welcome week to attend events such as a new student reception and student government association information session; additionally, welcome week check-in was at the union.

“This is a great time to introduce them to the facility and the amenities,” Baker said. “During this time, they are eager and adventurous and looking for exciting things to do on campus. It is an excellent opportunity to make a great first impression that could influence them throughout their tenure here.”

The DiGiorgio Campus Center at Winthrop University hosted a variety of educational—in addition to social—events for the 991



First-year students gather in the Winthrop University Campus Center for a safety presentation.



Students pack the Campus Center at Indiana University-Purdue University-Indianapolis, the site of many events.

incoming first-year students. According to Director Alicia Marstall, events included Stay Safe 360, which is hosted by the campus police and all first-year students are required to attend; student publications freshman writing workshop; and the on-campus job fair.

“With our building being a little over a year old, we are deliberately working to host as many varied events as we can,” Marstall said. “The more events we host, the more students we get to come in the building to see all that we offer.”

During this time, the Campus Center wants to become known as the living room of campus, where students can “come to grab a bite to eat, meet a friend for coffee, find a quiet place to study, attend an event, come to a student group meeting, or play your favorite video game.”

The Plemmons Student Union at Appalachian State University was the site of an international reception, allowing students from outside the United States to mingle with one another.

J. Scott Derrick, director of student activities and the University Center at Furman University, also understands the benefit of the union hosting a variety of programs.

“The first impression of a student is always the most significant,” he said. “If we can introduce them to the programs and services early in their college career, there is a good chance they will return to the building for other things in the future.”

The University Center hosted social events, including a magician and a movie, as well as academic-based events.

Orientation events at the union expose first-year students to the facility months or weeks before officially arriving on campus. Educational and informational activities often are required events for first-year and returning students, bringing a population through the door that may not come to the union otherwise. Just like large or small social-based programs showcase the college union, so can these events that draw thousands of students through the doors.


The more events we host, the more students we get to come in the building to see all that we offer.



Appalachian State University hosts an international student reception.

DRAWING

A CROWD



It's the jam-packed schedule of welcome week events that draw first-year and returning students. While the way these programs are delivered may vary by campus, the goal is social interaction and introducing new students to life at the institution.

Appalachian State University

According to Associate Director of Student Programs Jana Wise, the Appalachian Popular Programming Society (APPS) was founded to keep students on campus.

“The role of APPS in welcoming students to campus is to let the students know that there are various fun activities on campus for them,” she said. “APPS introduces the students to the different types of events offered on campus throughout the academic year during welcome week.”

One annual APPS event acts as a showcase of the Plemmons Student Union—Carnival Night.

“There is a plethora of activities offered in all locations of the union,” Wise said. “There is a roaming magician, a contra dance in Crossroads (our coffee house), carnival games in our solarium, a DJ dance in the Cascade’s (food area) seating area, interactive games in the Greenbriar Theatre, casino games in the Blue Ridge Ballroom, and an auction at the end of the night, where students can bid with the fake money won at the various games throughout the night.”

A popular programming space under the direction of the Student Union is Legends, a nightclub. A dance party at Legends during welcome week introduces students to this venue, allowing them to experience it firsthand.

“It [also] lets them know that this is a place they can come if they are not 21 or older, and it introduces them to the night life the campus offers,” Wise said.

Another annual event is the Big Sale, organized by Appalachian and the Community Together (ACT). As students move out at the end of each academic year, ACT collects unwanted items. The items are all stored in Legends during the academic break. The Friday prior to the beginning of the next academic year, on-campus

students move into residence halls. On that Friday and Saturday, the Big Sale is open for students to come purchase items needed for both on- and off-campus housing.

“There are hundreds of people lined up when we open,” said Jenny Koehn, associate director.

In its 10th year, the Big Sale netted almost \$20,000 in profit, growing vastly from the just under \$3,000 made in its first year.

“It is an environmental program at heart,” Koehn said. She believes the benefits of the program are: saving items from the landfill and putting them back into use; raising money and awareness for local nonprofits who are working to make their facilities more energy-efficient; providing gently used items at yard sale prices to help students and community members maintain a budget; and educating students.

Davidson College

The Union Board at Davidson College plans a variety of welcome week activities each year; a stand-out event in 2011 was the Willie Wonka Party. The Campus Center was transformed into a “world of pure imagination,” as Wonka would say. Different stations allowed students to make their own cupcakes, experience virtual reality, and compete with one another on inflatable games. And, of course, there was lots of candy.

“We always try to have activities that will not only bring people to our events, but also will keep people there,” said Chelsie Sumner, Union Board president. “It usually helps to have some active activities coupled with more crafty activities like the cupcake decorating.”

While the Willie Wonka Party was a big event, it was not the Union Board’s main event of the week—that would be the Hoodie Allen Concert.

“It was unexpected by many of the [first-year students] that there would be a concert their first week at Davidson, and the outdoor setting was open and fun,” Sumner said.

The most successful event, according to Sumner, was the ice cream social. Residence hall counselors bring first-year students, who are able to make their own sundaes and enjoy the music.

“The Union Board members attempt to mingle with the students and get them excited to be at Davidson,” Sumner said. “The event is so successful because it is a classic and fool proof. Who doesn’t like ice cream? Sometimes simple is better.”

Through the events, the Union Board’s goal is to help relieve the tension for students entering college and let them have fun, according to Sumner.



Students enjoy the virtual reality machines at Davidson College’s Willie Wonka Party.

University of Georgia

Among the numerous activities in the University of Georgia’s Tate Student Center, Dawgs after Dark is the highlight. This event is held four times throughout the academic year, but the first one is during welcome week—a fun and important way to introduce students to the facility and its programming.

“Having the first Dawgs after Dark event during welcome week is a great way to offer our students possibilities opposed to downtown options,” said Shannon Dean, graduate assistant. “This program also gives us a chance to socialize our students in ways that do not involve alcohol. We believe this program is extremely beneficial and is shown to meet a need for students who want alternative programming.”

Students lined the halls of the Student Center to get a wristband that allowed them to eat free food and participate in various activities, including crafts, inflatables, and laser tag. A typical Dawgs after Dark program draws 3,000 students. The event theme was Bright Lights, Big City; different areas of the building were decorated to be Hollywood, Paris, New York, and more.

University of Kentucky

At the University of Kentucky, a large, annual welcome week event is We are UK, featuring live student talent performances and free food. Nearly 4,000 students attended in 2011 to see the 19 acts. Food giveaways included pulled pork sandwiches, sushi, watermelon, ears of corn, and hot dogs.

We are UK is held in a common outdoor space near academic buildings. First-year students attending an academic event were greeted by the free food and music. And campus community members were lined down a walkway for food, while others were gathered in the outdoor amphitheater enjoying the performances.



We always try to have **activities** that will not only bring people to our events, but also will **keep people there.**

Students may come for the free food and entertainment, but according to Ashley Casteel, assistant director, event management, the event is about building school pride and helping students become University of Kentucky students.

While this event is not sponsored by the Student Activities Board, several others are, including the Student Center Spectacular.

“The Student Center Spectacular opens up the Student Center in a fun way, allowing students to learn about its offices and resources while participating in fun activities, including movie showings, games, and giveaways,” Casteel said.

Within the Student Center Spectacular, two events hosted by the Student Activities Board were the Headphone Disco and World is Your Canvas, which allows students to produce artwork using paints, crayons, LEGOS, and other media.

“The Headphone Disco is an event in which students get headphones programmed to one of two channels that pump out dance music,” Casteel said. “The location of the event includes DJs, a light show, body paint, and a dance-club atmosphere. Only students with headphones are able to hear the music, so the event ends up appearing like a big silent dance party.”

The Student Activities Board’s largest contribution to welcome week is Campus Ruckus. With an attendance around 5,000 each year, this event featured inflatables, a student organization fair, free food, and a fireworks show.

Through these events, said Casteel, the Student Activities Board is able to “enhance the college experience by ... entertaining, educational, and/or enriching programs that are reflective of contemporary issues and trends.”

North Carolina State University

Wolfpack Welcome Week has “a significant positive impact on students’ sense of belonging and connectedness to campus,” said Deb Luckadoo, director of campus activities. Primary outcomes of events during welcome week include helping students feel comfortable moving about campus, identify helpful upperclassmen and faculty/staff, and acknowledge organizations in which they are interested.

The 2011 schedule of events included Chillin’ and Grillin’ with the IRC and IFC, where students had the chance to spend time with the Inter-Residence Council officers as well as fraternity and sorority representatives; a Disk Golf Tournament; autograph session

with the university football team; free movies; and Welcome Back Pack, an outdoor event featuring comedian Motor Mouth Mike.

Events also included two service opportunities. Service NC State encouraged students to participate in the blood drive as well as a larger community service project called the University Million Meal event, where participants assembled meals to be used in school lunch programs in third-world countries.

An annual event is Campus Crawl, previously known as Cates Crawl. The Campus Crawl is an opportunity for students “to experiences the rich array of resources and student involvement opportunities available,” Luckadoo said.

Northern Kentucky University

At Northern Kentucky University, the Activities Programming Board sponsors a variety of activities during welcome week.

“The role of the programming board during welcome week is to create and host activities on campus that foster a sense of community among our students and to urge a sense of pride about being a Norse,” said Sarah Aikman, director of the University Center and Student Union.

Among the events hosted by the Activities Programming Board was hypnotist Dale K in his sixth welcome week appearance.

“The first time we brought him, we had about 30 students in the theater. We have grown to 900 in six years. Our students love his show and look forward to him every year,” Aikman said.

Around 500 students showed up for the Street Dance, complete with a DJ and sand volleyball. The Dueling Pianos had around 30 attendees and was “the perfect mix of passive and interactive,” Aikman said.

Among all the events Activities Programming Board hosted during welcome week, Aikman believes the most successful was the outdoor movie.

“We are able to involve many different groups on campus to help us host the event,” she said. “This year, the weather was beyond perfect, and it just felt great to be hanging out outside. The company with the screen also brought [Dance Dance Revolution] that the students played while we waited for the sun to go down.”

University of Tennessee–Knoxville

Through welcome week events, the University Center at the University of Tennessee–Knoxville is able to “promote and take advantage of opportunities to showcase the facility and services to incoming students” during welcome week said Director James Dittrich.

Several events were held in the UC Down Under, the games room, including the First Day Free Play, which offered free bowling, show rental, billiards, table tennis, and Xbox gaming, as well as Friday Frenzy, offering unlimited activities for just a few dollars.

“The Down Under is located in the basement level of the University Center in an area not highly visible,” Dittrich said. “Welcome week activities held in Down Under are intentional efforts to promote recreational programs and services to the university community.”

Though programs vary during welcome week, one objective remains constant: welcome week programs introduce first-year student to the campus culture and all of its offerings, including the ability to be involved with student activities and the college union. It is a time for students to attend events and have the opportunity to socialize with other members of the campus community.



Students packed the Tate Student Center for Dawgs after Dark.

The importance of being

INVOLVED

A primary connection to the union for many students is involvement with student organizations. But before students can become involved with on-campus organizations, they must first be introduced to the variety of options. Student organization fairs fill this role, allowing new and returning students to explore the myriad options.

Fall Kickoff University of North Carolina–Greensboro

At the beginning of each academic year, the University of North Carolina–Greensboro hosts the Fall Kickoff. More than 100 student organizations line College Avenue, located right outside the Elliott University Center, to promote their offerings to the student body from their “home.”

“[It] is both figuratively and literally at the heart of campus,” said Curtis Tarver, associate director for programs. “Our student groups and many of the offices that participate call the Elliott University Center home, as does our office. Those who get involved are even more likely to call this area home through their events and involvement.”

Fall Kickoff typically lasts five hours and is held on the first day of classes. Tarver estimates around 9,000 students walked through the event this year, roughly half of the student body.

“I love that this takes place on the first day of classes,” Tarver said. “It helps hammer home the pairing of both the curricular and cocurricular campus life beginning.”

Fall Kickoff is an important way to introduce the campus community the variety of student organizations.

“A student organization fair is a great way for students to become connected with a student group and become part of the University of North Carolina–Greensboro community,” Tarver said. “On a campus of 18,000, it is easy to feel lost or overwhelmed. Becoming part of a stu-



Students gather outside the Elliott Student Center during Fall Kickoff.

dent group helps shrink that number a bit while still providing a valuable touch point to the university.”

Fallfest University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill

In its 15th year, Fallfest at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill continued to grow. An estimated 20,000 students trekked from their on- and off-campus housing to check out the live performances, partake of the free food, and learn about the more than 200 organizations present at the evening event.

“Each year, our attendance grows,” said Don Luse, director [now retired]. “We do not want this event to be something that students come to and watch. We want students to be engaged and active and having fun. It can’t be passive.”

Fallfest originally started as an alcohol-free event for students to kick off the academic year. The live entertainment and free food were incentives for students to attend, and the university gained the added benefit of introducing those students to ways for involvement on campus.

“The purpose of Fallfest is to provide new and returning students a fun activity at the beginning of the school year that encourages participation and interaction among all segments of the



Thousands of students pack the street during Fallfest.

University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill community,” Luse said. “The primary focus is to give student organizations and university departments a creative way to inform and recruit new members and service users.”

This year, student organization tables lined the street. Those without tables “freelance” by walking the crowd with promotional signs. Two stages, one on each side of the event, provided a place for students to offer performances, such as stepping, as a way to recruit new members.

We do not want this event to be something that students come to and watch. **We want students to be engaged** and active and having fun. **It can't be passive.**

“It is an opportunity for them to showcase their student organization and recruit new members,” Luse said. “We do not accept outside performers because this is for students and student groups only. We do not want to entertain students as much as engage them and encourage them to join a student performance group.”

In addition to involvement information, students enjoyed the tens of thousands of donuts, sandwiches, bagels, sodas, corn dogs, fruit snacks, popsicles, pizza slices, and other snack food items that were given away. And activities for students included inflatables and recreation opportunities.

“We ask vendors to think about what they are serving carefully and how it’s packaged and served so that we have as little impact on the environment as possible,” Luse said.

Fallfest is a big undertaking each year, but the benefits are worth the six months of planning. “It takes a village to pull it off,” Luse said.

Student Organization Showcase Clayton State University

As the 2007 academic year approached, Ben Hopkins, operations coordinator, and other Clayton State University administra-

tors noticed that “there wasn’t an accurate way for performance-based groups like our gospel choir, cheerleaders, or dance team to convey what being in their organization was like through a simple table top display,” Hopkins said.

The answer: a student organization showcase.

Starting with just a few student organizations in its first year, the showcase has quickly grown to become a welcome week highlight, said Hopkins.

Between 500–800 students head to the Student Activities Center lawn on the Thursday prior to the start of classes to watch the student organizations perform each year; the event is packed with performances from stepping to singing to cultural dances.

“The diversity in the acts and ability of our students to put together a wonderful show gives me pride in our students,” Hopkins said. “It has become a tradition and works very well as a recruitment tool for groups that want to get out there a little bit.”

Every campus has to reach students in their own way. Whether going big or keeping the environment more intimate, the reasoning behind student organization fairs is the same: getting students involved on campus.



A greek-based step team performs at the student organization showcase.

the information

HUB

As both new and returning students come back to campus for the start of the academic year, it is a prime time to be sure they are aware of various resources and opportunities. Whether seeking details about ways to get involved, what services are available, how to get around campus and the surrounding area, or what events are taking place, the union serves as a primary hub of information for students and other members of the campus community.

Georgia State University

Throughout the school year at Georgia State University, students can access a one-stop service window in an administrative building on campus, but to start each semester, the Student Center has a program called the “Mega One-Stop Shop.”

Carole Golder, associate director for services and programs, explained how this program includes participation by financial aid, registrar, academic advising, housing, auxiliary parking and I.D. card services, information services and technology, library, bookstore, athletics, and health services.

“It takes place the first week of each semester on Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m.,” Golder said.

The program has become such a crucial source for students to get the information they need at the beginning of the term that it

has even been extended to include a “mini-one-stop” for the two weekdays following.

Georgia Institute of Technology

The information services at the Student Center at Georgia Institute of Technology answer a wide range of questions from visitors, guests, parents, and current students about metro Atlanta, events on campus, campus directions, dining options, shopping, and entertainment, according to Kim Harrington-Pete, acting director.

Other services are provided by the Student Center Information Desk, however, which is an additional reason for students to see it as an important stop in their life on campus. The services provided include: locker rentals, lost and found, digital and poster signage approval, emergency assistance, notary public, reservation

When the Campus Center was designed, it was purposefully designed to create a **one place of service** regardless if you are a commuter or live on campus.

INFORMATION

INFORMATION CENTER

STAFF
ON
DUTY



Students browse the fliers available at Georgia State University's Student Center information desk.

inquiries, banner and display case check-out, and other coordination of needs in the building.

Duke University

In addition to staffing an information service desk seven days a week, the Bryan University Center at Duke University also has

added “the Hub” as a way to connect students with information about performing arts in the community.

“The Hub offers deeply discounted tickets to a number of Durham community events,” said David Pittman, associate director of student life. “Many Duke students who move here from large cities miss the rich cultural activity ‘at their fingertips,’ and those from



Informational fliers line a wall of the Duke University Center.

areas with less enjoy seeing some of the major concerts, comedy tours, and Broadway musicals that tour through Durham.”

Providing this new service in the facility has become a highly valued source of information for students, as well as connecting the institution with venues around the community.

Indiana University-Purdue University–Indianapolis

“When the Campus Center was designed, it was purposefully designed to create a one place of service regardless if you are a commuter or live on campus,” said Michael Sprinkle, assistant director of events and conference services. Additionally, the facility is located geographically at the center of campus, which lends well to meeting this intended purpose.

Open for 15 hours a day Monday through Saturday and nine hours on Sundays during the school year, students are able to access the diverse staff and services all in one location. These information resources include admissions, financial aid, bursar, bookstore, bank, and health clinic, as well as offices for student involvement and the dean of students.

University of North Carolina–Charlotte

With the Student Union seeing more than 50,000 visitors on a weekly basis, it is a great place for students to access information about events and services, but the staff at University of North Carolina–Charlotte does not see their role stopping there.

“We are very aggressive in our use of all forms of media, particularly emphasizing Facebook and Twitter, and believe that our

use of these common forms of communication for students allows us to be identified as a source of information,” said Jerry Mann, executive director.

Northern Kentucky University

Through both the Student Union and University Center, three information desks are available to members of the community, open for extensive hours throughout the week.

“All the desks answer questions, give directions, and answer the phones,” said Sarah Aikman, director. “The main desk in the Student Union loans out laptops and serves as the campus lost and found.”

In addition to answering basic questions about the locations and hours of various campus services during welcome week, the Student Union also serves as host to different information fairs to kick off the new school year.

“Fresh Fusion is the big one,” Aikman said. “This event is sponsored by the Office of Orientation and Parent Programs. There were more than 1,500 students at the event. It is a large organization fair with interactive booths, free pizza, and soda.”

The event schedule in the facility also included a part-time job fair sponsored by the Career Development Center.

With thousands of students and community members walking through unions each day, it makes sense the facility would serve as an information center, whether that be giving directions, offering resources such as the financial aid office, or providing details on local happenings.

services
and
amenities

As campuses expand and change to fit the needs of a growing, diverse population, campus services become imperative to recruitment, acclimation, and retention. The college union is a central place on campus to provide students with the services they both want and need.

Bookstore

Students need their books. Whether the college union manages its own bookstore or provides space for a retail bookstore, students, families, and fans alike will be looking for this service on campus. From the newly built bookstores of Furman University and Winthrop University to the longstanding bookstores of University of Tennessee–Knoxville and University of North Carolina–Greensboro, it was obvious that each union had become the welcoming hub for incoming and returning students needing to purchase their books, university attire, and school supplies.

Arts and crafts

Students walk through art-clad hallways and rooms in the union, which often provide space for students to adorn with original artwork or to enjoy local artists.

At Georgia Institute of Technology, students show creativity in the Craft Center, a student-run space where students can partake in activities from photography to pottery. North Carolina State University has a similar craft center that is open to beginners and advanced artists, as well as the students, faculty, and the public as an art school with classes offered each semester in various craft media such as pottery, sculpture, photography, woodworking, fiber arts, lapidary, glass, jewelry, metals, and more.

Appalachian State University celebrates art in their union art gallery, The Looking Glass Gallery, introducing students to work created by fellow students as well as different forms of artwork.

Dining services

By providing dining services, the college union becomes the place on campus to stop for a quick bite in between classes, a quiet

The college union is the place on campus that is **truly the students', and the services** made available to them within the building **reflect that philosophy.**



Students take advantage of a woodworking shop at North Carolina State University.

cup of coffee, or dinner with a large group of friends. Duke University houses five dining options in the Bryan University Center, including a popular Mexican restaurant, Armadillo Grill. Duke University is also home to the trend of food trucks that may be found on one of the main campus thoroughfares, giving students another dining option while walking to and from the Bryan Center.

At the University of North Carolina–Charlotte, the dining facilities in the Student Union have become the place to be on game days or for events with Norm’s providing a large space to eat, study, play pool, or watch television on the large flatscreens. There are eight dining options at the Student Union, all providing students with a different style of food, service, and hours to fit their needs.

Games rooms

Even just having a place for students to kick back and play some video games or billiards has jumped to the most popular list for several college unions.

Northern Kentucky University tailored its games room to fit the needs and wants of students. The games room includes 17 different gaming stations, several billiards tables, board and card games, sofas, and bean bag chairs to lounge around or sit and talk with friends. Two large televisions are also available for students to use while taking a break from their studies. Indiana University-Purdue University–Indianapolis’s games room allows students who commute to have a place to come and hang out with friends or relax in-between classes during a long day on campus. Winthrop University offers two games rooms areas. One is focused on traditional games such as billiards, while the other area offers console gaming stations.



An outdoor dining area at University of North Carolina–Charlotte allows students to enjoy the weather while eating between classes.

Recreation

While the union may be the heart of the university, recreational centers are the muscle. Clayton State University's recreational facility in the union includes space for full-court basketball, state-of-the-art weightlifting and exercise machines, as well as additional space for group workout classes. In addition to its gym, Davidson College runs the Davidson Outdoor program from the union, offering recreational activities such as backpacking, canoeing, kayaking, and rock climbing, alongside survival training, bike repair, and leadership training. And the Plemmons Student Union at Appalachian State has the Mount Michelle Life Fitness Centre with an aerobics studio, weight room, and cardio equipment.

Other institutions, such as Georgia State University and Winthrop University, do not have a space within their unions but are conveniently located next to their recreational facilities. Whether it's by the placement of both facilities on campus or dedicated space within the union, college unions that promote easy access to recreational facilities are an integral part of campus life.

Theaters

Theaters are quintessential in the college union, providing space for seminars and meetings, movie programming, guest lectures or speakers, and more. The University of Kentucky has invested in an updated sound system and display in the Worsham Theater, allowing up to 500 students to enjoy a true movie theater experience. At

Davidson College, the Duke Family Performance Hall in the Knobloch Campus Center brings live performances to campus, creating a seamless relationship between academics, arts, entertainment, and college community life for more than 600 viewers at a time.

Other services

Not every college union is alike. There are several spaces that provide services to students unlike any other, due to location on campus, or space, or student interest. At Wake Forest University, the Benson Copy Center located in the University Center provides services to students, including full-service monogramming, a self-service area with computer terminals, a Kodak photo printing kiosk, wide-format color poster printing, color copies, and binding. As students work on class projects, these services become vital to producing quality work on time.

Winthrop University's green space, lovingly nicknamed the "backyard," is made available to students for programming. The space is located directly behind the DiGiorgio Campus Center and allows students to participate in outdoor events in close proximity to the food court and recreation area. Not to mention that students are able to appreciate an open lawn to hang out or maybe throw a Frisbee on those sunny days.

The college union is the place on campus that is truly the students', and the services made available to them within the building reflect that philosophy.

students
on
the job

College unions often employ more students than any other campus department, and college union professionals typically rely on student staff to get the job done. It is apparent how important student employees are to the union and how staff members are utilizing training programs and recognition systems to create an inviting atmosphere in which students can thrive.

Student employee recruitment

With every new year, there are fresh faces wanting to work on campus for the sake of convenience, flexibility, and job training opportunities. With competition for talented student employees, it can be hard to market the benefits of a specific position within the union. There are ways, however, to get students' attention.

Furman University uses a display board to promote open student positions in the University Center; many universities post student employee applications and positions online as with the University of North Carolina–Greensboro and Emory University. Others promote the rewards of working in the union by competing with outside employers in a student employment fair at the beginning of the year like Indiana University–Purdue University–Indianapolis.

Ultimately, however, by creating a positive, rewarding experience for student employees, unions are able to ensure retention in the workforce as well as reap the benefits of positive word-of-mouth marketing when recruiting new employees.

Student employee training

Year in and year out, new students join the ranks of those who work on campus to supplement their income, build their resume, or fill unused time. College union staff must train and educate about what the role of the college union is on campus along with the day-to-day operations of the building.

At the Emory University's Dobbs University Center, student employee training consisted of an off-site, multiday retreat before

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Emory University student employees make a presentation during training.

Graham White
Summer '08

Allison
Gibson
09/10

BORDEN
ORWALL '08-'11

07

Josh
Singer '10

Rachel
Barber
Fall 2009 -
Spring 2011

Carly
Hufstedt
'08-'09

emily medman '07-'08
'08-'09

Caine
Drosten
Fall '09 -



the beginning of the semester to create a unified, knowledgeable team of student managers. The student manager position requires students to be responsible for the operations of the University Center during afternoons, evenings, and weekends, so their training is vital. Using the ACUI core competencies and the Leadership Emory Tenants, professional staff members created Student Employee Competencies for the academic year, which included action steps student staff needed to take to understand the skills of their job. The expertise of returning student managers to train newly hired managers was also essential to the program.

On the final day of the retreat back at the University Center, students and staff performed the True Colors Test to best understand how they would work together before making their rounds and learning firsthand about their role in the center.

The approach taken by Georgia State University introduced teambuilding activities into student training to enhance students' familiarity with one another. Beyond that, however, the professional staff members charged experienced student staff members to develop the complete training guide for new student employees. This gave the returning students an opportunity to learn how to create a training program and be involved with the union on a deeper level while also providing new student employees the chance to learn from their peers.

Wake Forest University utilized the FISH! Philosophy in student employee training and has previously used the Pickle Principle.

Student employee recognition

Recognizing student employees for their hard work and talent goes a long way in building a positive environment, student involvement, and retention.

Wake Forest University has created a tradition among student employees whereby they sign the wall in the student employee lounge as seniors, making their mark for future students to see. Current student employees also have their pictures on the wall in recognition of their hard work in the Benson University Center.

University of North Carolina–Greensboro recognizes student employees by awarding a Student Employee of the Month Award. Students may be nominated online with the support of their supervisor, and their name is included on a wall in the University Center in recognition of their accomplishment.

At University of North Carolina–Charlotte, student employees get to relax in their own space in the Student Union, which has an employee lounge specifically for students. The institution also recognizes current student employees on their website and awards a Student Employee of the Year Award.

Welcome week is the time when new and returning student employees take part in training activities. It is a time to share the message of the college union and connect students with one another in preparation for the academic year. No matter the recruiting or training process, the constant among all institutions is the knowledge that student employees are vital to the operation of a union.

about the authors



Justin Rudisille, online engagement manager, coordinates educational content delivery and member engagement through online tools, including work with online learning programs, communities of practice, and other social media and technology initiatives. Rudisille earned bachelors' degrees in adolescent education and mathematics from the University of Toledo and a master's degree in college student personnel from Bowling Green State University.



Elizabeth Stringer, associate editor, oversees production of *The Bulletin*, works with Commons contributors, and provides support as needed to other ACUI publications. She also manages all publications for the Campus Safety, Health, and Environmental Management Association. Stringer studied journalism and communications at Indiana University.



As sales and services manager, Gillian Thiebe manages the day-to-day operations, marketing initiatives, and overall vision of ACUI Procure and Promos. Having received bachelors' degrees in international business and French from Ball State University, she continued her education at Indiana University–Bloomington and received a master's degree in international and comparative education with a focus in higher education and student affairs.



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