Transforming Albertsons Library Building for Student Success

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October 2016

Our value statement process (the topic of my last Dean’s message) encouraged me to look more closely at our customer service data over time, particularly in relation to the needs and concerns of undergraduate and graduate students.

Data from the Library’s regular customer service surveys show increasing expectations and a widening gap between perceived quality of the Albertsons Library facility and student expectations for the space. The library building as a top area for needed improvements appeared for the first time in the 2014 survey. In the 2016 survey 5 out of 6 of the top areas needing improvement were facilities related. Undergraduates identified facilities issues as 3 of the top 3 areas needing improvement while graduate students named facilities related issues for 2 of the top 3 areas needing improvement.

During Spring Semester 2016, Albertsons Library launched a project to help answer the question: “How can Albertsons Library become a recruiting and retention show piece for Boise State University?” How can the library be the place that students want to be, that actively supports student success and persuades undecided students that Boise State is the place for them? We assembled a small group of campus participants including student representatives, reviewed existing spaces, gathered and evaluated existing data, and recruited a group of masters’ students to conduct a series of student focus groups.

One exciting finding: during winter 2016, the Boise State Quad Enhancement Committee undertook a student survey to identify key locations on campus and students’ images of these areas (Boise State, 2016). Albertsons Library was at the top of students minds for 50% of the survey questions including: What are your favorite buildings? Where do you hang out? Where do you frequently go to learn, engage in intellectual conversations, study, and to be anonymous? Where do you feel most like a student? Clearly the building is of importance to Boise State students.

Data gathered was used to create and improve student personas that are being used for planning and processes leading toward a vision of future library spaces up to and including the library addition proposed in the Campus Master Plan. Albertsons Library will continue the visioning process in FY17 to further inform long-term planning.

This project also resulted in the following recommendations for physical improvements to better serve students:

- Improve problems with cleanliness in the Library
- Increase availability of electrical outlets, ways to plug-in
- Evaluate and improve HVAC, particularly in study rooms
- Acoustics/Noise: evaluate and improve noise problems in quiet study areas
- Lighting: evaluate lighting and improve problem areas
• Improve wayfinding and library interior signage
• Rearrange existing furniture to better reflect use of space & purchase a variety of new furniture
• Create semi private nooks for student study
• Add whiteboards and writing surfaces
• Evaluate replacement of study room reservation systems
• Revise 1st Floor to improve flow, to draw people in and make the Library more welcoming
• Rearrange 3rd & 4th Floors to take advantage of windows and potential for natural light

Some service improvements were recommended as well. To read the entire report go to Transforming Albertsons Library into A Student Recruiting & Retention Show Piece - Phase I, July 2016.

References:
Boise State University. (Winter 2016) Quad Enhancement Committee Student Survey.