PHASE II
GATEWAY TO OPPORTUNITY
Completing the Transformation to a 21st Century Environment

Delaware County Community College
Although every learning commons facility studied during this project was uniquely different, they all supported the characteristics of a generation of students who crave social, technologically infused spaces that are flexible and comfortable enough to accomplish a variety of learning-centered tasks.

Susan McMullen

Faculty, tutors and librarians will be embedded in classes or study groups conducted in the Learning Commons, offering students access to all academic resources in a one-stop location. At the same time, this model allows the College to maximize and consolidate into one location the human resources currently required to serve multiple support centers in writing, reading, ESL and information literacy.

Stimulating and attractive designs in computer configurations and lounges provide students with ample working space for themselves and their peers, faculty or tutors. Group study, an intrinsic feature of the learning commons, is encouraged by multiple spaces that facilitate collaborative learning and satisfy the need for social interaction centered around the student’s work. A café adds to the ambience, creating an informal environment for work or collaboration.

Group study rooms have a clear glass front wall that enables light to penetrate from the exterior to the interior.
Completing the Transformation

The renovated Auditorium and Learning Commons will continue the transformation of the Marple Campus begun with the opening of the STEM Center and further solidify the College’s role as a gateway to opportunity reflective of the technological and pedagogical advances of the 21st century.

The opening of the STEM Complex in 2009 and 2010 has not only generated accolades from the community at large, but also boosted enrollment in engineering and the sciences. The awareness of opportunities in STEM fields was a boon to students in search of rewarding academic and career paths. For the College, it was a timely investment in the future.

With the aging of the Marple Campus, the College has continued to underwrite numerous capital projects, maintaining and upgrading nearly every space – always with a student-centered focus. While some of the renovations were prioritized by the move from the Academic building to the STEM Center, other prominent spaces in need of renovation had to be deferred.

Two of the most visible and highly utilized spaces that remain in need of major renovations are the large Auditorium and the Library at a combined total cost estimate of $9.1 million. These facilities are obsolete and do not reflect the high quality of the College’s academic offerings and newer facilities.

The Auditorium, once a vibrant center for performing arts and events, will be restored to showcase world-class music, theater and cultural events. The transformation of the Library into a 21st century model, known as a learning commons, will revolutionize the way information is integrated with academic support to serve the needs of a digital generation.
Aside from its outdated appearance, the Auditorium no longer meets modern standards. It has no sprinkler system, is not ADA compliant and the aisles have no railings or lighting – a hazard in an amphitheater design. The stage lighting and sound system are neither reliable nor adequate for student or guest performances and the stage is too small to accommodate dance troupes and larger productions.

In recent years, the Division of Communications, Arts and Humanities has recruited locally and nationally renowned scholars and artists who have enhanced and expanded academic offerings. The Division enrolls the largest number of students at the College who have the most demanding extra-curricular expectations. The Auditorium is the single most important platform for fulfilling their academic requirements. In its current state, the Auditorium is not commensurate with the quality of the College’s academic programs and is not reflective of the renaissance in the College’s arts programming.

At a cost of $1.1 million, the Auditorium is long overdue for renovations that will restore its appearance, meet current standards and reflect its role as a respected cultural venue.

The Information Center will be the entrance point for the Learning Commons and serve as a clearinghouse for information and support.

The starting point for the design and delivery of services in a learning commons is to accommodate the various learning styles represented in a diverse student body. By its very nature, a learning commons offers flexible, individualized support through faculty interaction, online resources and peer study groups. Online assistance and tutoring will be offered at extended hours and enable students at all College locations to benefit.

Reducing the need to acquire and to catalog print resources as in a traditional library setting will result in a cost savings that can be better utilized in subscriptions to electronic resources. The redeployment of librarians to classrooms in partnership with faculty and tutors also will result in greater efficiencies in learning and in the allocation of resources.
Spaces that focus on human-centered design and encourage learner participation will become increasingly important in transitioning to a commons model that emphasizes the academic community of learners and the range of services they require.

Susan McMullen

The evolution from a traditional academic library to a learning commons represents yet another fulfillment of the College’s mission and commitment to student success. The learning-centered design will support and engage students – a critical factor in retaining students until graduation. With new and meaningful ways for students and faculty to interact, the Learning Commons is expected to become the center of academic life at the College.
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The Campaign

The Gateway to Opportunity – Phase II Capital Campaign seeks to raise $1.5 million to help fund the Learning Commons and Auditorium. Gifts at any level are welcome. Gifts in the range of $10,000 and above will be afforded prominent naming opportunities. A campaign to “purchase a seat” in the Auditorium will be offered to a broad constituency at a modest cost.

For more information, please contact:

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