Learning Commons: What’s Working?

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Why assess?

- Need to describe the value of the 21st century library

- Demonstrate the importance of the commons to institutional goals and programs

- Provide a framework for understanding the interrelationship between the commons facility, the institutional teaching and learning program, and services
Assessment of Learning Commons

“I am studying the relationship between renovations, or "service transitions" and assessment. Believe it or not, there isn't a lot of published material about learning commons assessment out there, which is partly why I’m doing this paper. I want to compare how libraries assess success and what measures are used for assessment and how Learning Commons standards may need to be defined for a community such as this.”

Posted by Erin McCoy on INFOCOMMONS-L, 10/23/08
How do we conceptualize success for learning commons?

Reinvigorating the library

Enhancing learning

Promoting culture and community

Other
Reinvigorating the library

Counts

Satisfaction measures

Campus tour stop

American University of Cairo Learning Commons
Leveraging assessment of use and satisfaction

- Demonstrating trends and demand in response to “why do we need a library?” questions
- Conveying positive atmosphere especially on campuses trying to promote a change in social climate
- Portraying the library as a cultural and academic center on campus and a point of campus pride
Enhancing learning

Use of:

Group study rooms with amenities

Multi-media studios

Presentation practice rooms

Well-equipped classrooms
Leveraging assessment of impact on learning

- Working with targeted initiatives on campus
  - Learning communities
  - Freshman year programs
  - Honors programs
  - Undergraduate research programs

- Working with partners
  - Value of partnerships with writing center, IT, and others

- Demonstrating value of facility, equipment, software, and services for specific programs and courses

- Correlating assessment with broader measures, e.g. NSSE, accreditation
Promoting learning, community, & culture

Hosting student science posters in the library lobby

Displaying art in the lobby
Promoting community

Providing food and drink for students working long hours

Providing an informal meeting place for students and faculty

Providing a home for commuting students

Providing a getaway for grad students
Promoting culture

Showcasing art - murals, paintings, sculptures

Hosting events – readings, seminars, performances
Leveraging assessment of impact on community & culture

- Working with student services or special programs to demonstrate impact of learning commons on retention and/or satisfaction with campus life
- Demonstrating the cultural value of the commons to the campus
Focusing on assessment can lead to a clearer conception of a service model

- What are you trying to achieve?

- What mechanisms are in place (physical and virtual space, equipment, software, and services) to support your goals?

- How will you know whether you are successful?
  - Quantitative measures
  - Qualitative measures
Let’s take a look at perspectives from two learning commons

- University of Colorado, Boulder
- University of Pennsylvania