

Title : Multicultural Student Center: Measuring a Transformative Campus Experience

Transforming a campus starts with students' understanding that home is more than where you live...

Where there is an ethnic/cultural center on campus, multicultural students say they feel right at home in the center; an instant community. They learn from and grow with students who look like them, who have similar experiences. [Viewpoints, The face of Diversity at the Univ. of Wash, Fall 2009] This scenario is used numerous times to justify separate but equal amenities across campuses for multicultural students, but transformation of these students and their cohort starts with collaborating on the delivery of a campus environment where "all students feel *right* at home". This notion of familiar faces in familiar spaces took on new meaning with the execution of a design process for the Multicultural Student Center by NOMAS (national organization of minority architects students) on the K-State campus. Instead of utilizing its members, led primarily by international students, NOMAS embraced the entire student population in the college for their design charrette. Teams researched and augmented case studies identified by the Office of Diversity; interviewed representatives of the 23 multicultural groups; and observed "where they lived" before their 18-hour brainstorming session with professional architects, and faculty mentors. Multicultural students were invited to participate and were available all day as design consultants. This method of learning brought about a deeper understanding and appreciation by multicultural students of the design process, and the architecture students' sensitivity when serving an unfamiliar student population as client. Creating public spaces for faculty, students, administrators, and visitors on any campus has typically resided with university officials and facility staff. Giving other stakeholders, especially student "communities", access to a campus planning/design process is an exception, not the rule. This consensus imagination process also brought about a new realization by university officials that these architecture students could produce a design that exceeded their expectations. This transformation process continued with the selection of and collaboration with the architect for the design, demonstrated by his lead designer. The result of this collaboration is an amazing design--the Jewel of the Midwest--that will transform the K-State campus.

Type of session: poster session

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