STUDENT UNION TRANSFORMATION:
A CASE STUDY ON CREATING PURPOSEFUL SPACE

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September 14, 2016
I dedicate this work to the memory of my parents, William H. Maxwell (1937-1998) and Dorinna M. Guimond Maxwell (1938-2006). They had a remarkable and beautiful relationship based on love, trust, and integrity. They were married just over 40 years and sadly passed away of cancer at 61 and 68. They taught me always to be true to myself, to do good and honest work, and leave things better than I found them in all that I do. I wish they were here today for no other reason than I could give them a hug and thank them for their unconditional love and support for me. They are missed but are forever present.
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Daniel M. Maxwell

STUDENT UNION TRANSFORMATION:
A CASE STUDY ON CREATING PURPOSEFUL SPACE

Colleges provide many opportunities for students to interact with faculty and staff, participate in and lead student organizations, and attend campus events. This type of involvement creates positive student engagement that nourishes students’ connection while in college (Boyer, 1987). Students seek on-campus social interactions and supportive networks through programs, services, and activities (Kuh, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 2001). Campus facilities that provide spaces where students can come together intentionally are critical (Kuh, Douglas, Lund, & Ramin-Gyurnek, 1994).

Designing physical spaces, such as a student union, where social and intellectual connections can occur, contributes community for students. In order to design spaces that foster opportunities for community, specifically a sense of inclusion and engagement, there is a need for understanding organic community (Myers, 2007) and the way individuals use and interact with physical space. Specifically, campus ecology (Banning, 2012) provides the theoretical framework for understanding interactions within the physical space.

In this qualitative case study, the notions of community in the overall planning process and the way students use two identified spaces in a student union were explored. Semi-structured interviews provided insight in the planning process and observations provided an understanding of the way individuals engage in the space.

Findings from this study indicate how intentional planning of physical space design impacts the social and intellectual interactions between individuals using the space. Results from this study suggest that attention to the design of physical space matters. For student affairs
professionals, results from this study demonstrate a positive impact on community as an outcome of the intentional design of the student union.

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Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

College provides many opportunities for students to interact with faculty and staff, participate in and lead student organizations, and attend campus events. This type of involvement creates positive student engagement opportunities that nourish students’ sense of belonging and feeling of connection (Boyer, 1987). Student engagement takes place within the campus environment, which can facilitate or limit these opportunities (Kuh 2001; Kuh, Hu, & Vesper 2000; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt 2005; Kuh, Schuh, & Whitt 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Students seek on-campus social interactions and supportive networks through programs, services, and activities (Kuh, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 2001). Therefore, facilities that provide spaces in which students can come together are critical (Kuh, Douglas, Lund, & Ramin-Gyurnek, 1994).

Studies have demonstrated the relationship between a physical space and its influence on behaviors (Bell, Fisher, Baum, & Green, 1990; Ellen, 1982; Gieryn, 2002; Strange & Banning, 2001). Although research exists on ecological approaches to college student development (Banning & Bryner, 2001) with some occasional references to college student unions (Banning, 2000; Banning & Cunard; 1996; Kuh, 2009), Educating by Design: Creating Campus Learning Environments That Work (Strange & Banning, 2001) was one of the last significant published works on focused on campus ecology. Additional research on campus ecology would provide college campus planners with additional knowledge to inform the design of physical spaces where social interactions can occur to enhance campus community building.

Statement of the Problem

Opportunities for students to connect and build a sense of belonging are important to their success (Blimling, Whitt, & Associates, 1999; Brazzell & Reisser, 1999; Kuh, 2007; Pascarella
& Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 2001). “Within the ecological perspective, student affairs organizations on campuses are concerned with the designing of campus environments which provide an optimal fit between students and the educational community” (Fawcett, Huebner, & Banning, 1978, p. 35). The design of physical spaces, such as a student union where social and intellectual interactions can occur, is a contributing factor in creating positive connections for students. This positive engagement in turn contributes to the sense of belonging and success (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005; Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 1991). Whether a student lives on or off campus, there are benefits to being engaged (Astin, 1968; Kuh et al, 2005; Kuh et al, 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 2001).

“Colleges and universities seeking to be communities require communal space” (Bonfiglio, 2004, p. 28), and student unions have always served as a point of destination for a variety of programs and student services. Although the amenities differ depending on the college or university, the opportunity for students to gather is fundamental to the union. Thelin (2004) explained that student unions at American colleges and universities “sought to reduce dispersion of students into residential cliques” (p. 193) while providing a “substantial gain for commuter students” (p. 193) with access to communal space and services on the campus. This perspective is important because we know that “the manner in which campus facilities are designed and the ways in which services are delivered can create either a welcoming or a chilling environment” (Jacoby & Garland, 2004, p. 72).

In order to design spaces that create the greatest impact on community for students, there is a need for research on how individuals use and interact with physical space. Dewey (1916) believed in the importance of physical space in relationship to an individual’s learning and identity development. Lewin (1936) proposed that behavior is the function of the interaction
between a person and his/her environment, \( B=f(P, E) \). Alexander (1979) referred to pattern language as “a process through which the order of a building…grows out directly from the inner nature of the people, and the animals, and plants, and matter which are in it” (p. 7). At its core, a pattern language describes how people see space in answer to a challenge or problem; it brings to life the relationship of the space with the individuals using the space. It is essential that institutions of higher education look through an architectural lens and begin to examine the relationship between physical design and student-centered facilities like the student union.

College union facilities have been a part of the North American campus since the late 1800s. The building of these spaces can be done haphazardly or with great care. A reprint of Hale’s 1946 article on “Thoughts on Union Architecture” in the Association of College Unions International’s *The Bulletin* (2014) speaks to the interconnectedness of the high ideals and purpose of the college union and the role of architecture to aid in the delivery of services. The Association of College Unions International (ACUI), the professional association for staff members working within college unions and student activities, has published books to provide insight into the multifaceted construction process of a student union, on the role of the college union on campus, and to showcase collections of college union images. For example, *From Vision to Reality: Designing and Building College Unions to Meet the Needs of the 21st Century Student* (Robertson & Kirby, 2001) shows the construction process with many anecdotes by practitioners, but with limited references to the literature on physical space and facilities planning. *College Union Dynamic: Flexible Solutions for Successful Facilities* (Knell & Latta, 2006) “explores the various architectural expressions of the college union and seeks to draw some conclusions from its remarkable evolution” (p. ix). Lastly, *Revisiting Construction* (ACUI, 2012) showcases the changes in student unions through dynamic imagery coupled with
narratives from the respective campus communities on the physical space. Each publication, through its own words and images, validates the relevance of the “Role of the College Union” statement:

The union is the community center of the college, serving students, faculty, staff, alumni, and guests. By whatever form or name, a college union is an organization offering a variety of programs, activities, services, and facilities that, when taken together, represent a well-considered plan for the community life of the college. (ACUI, 2009, para. 1)

Yet, none of these publications contributes to the research, and there is still a void in the empirical evidence on the role of the college union in building community (DeSawal & Yakaboski, 2013).

In a 30-year review of higher education dissertations, DeSawal and Yakaboski (2013) identified only 23 studies with a focus on college student unions. Further, only six of the studies focused on the actual facility. They emphasized that “college union facility research [to date has been] focused on satisfaction, perceptions, and the use of college union facilities” (p. 30). The lack of evidence on the impact of physical space as a catalyst to community building challenges the notion of the “Role of the College Union” (ACUI, 2009) as the community center or the “living room” of the college.

**Purpose of the Study**

“The university campus is an evolving image, and the college union is one of its ever-changing reflections” (Knell & Latta, 2006, p. 29). The college union has progressed over time to meet the changing needs and expectations of the student body and campus, while seeking consistently to improve the quality and competitiveness of its services. A student union, which
fosters opportunities for students to connect, has an impact on student success, persistence, and graduation. This descriptive case study focused on and contributes to the research on physical space in the context of student union facilities and on community for students. Creating opportunities for students to connect and experience a sense of belonging is important to their success (Blimling, Whitt & Associates, 1999; Brazzell & Reisser, 1999; Kuh, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 2001).

In this case study I explored the influence of physical space of a student union on the interactions among students in the campus environment. The study took place at a large, public, research institution in the southwest with a recently completed expansion and renovation of its student union. The findings of the study provide insight into the need for evidence-based planning for physical space intended to build and/or enhance community. To date, anecdotal evidence showcases heartwarming experiences of students benefiting from feeling a connection to a physical space, but there is still limited research on what contributes to these experiences within a student union. Based on campus ecology theories, there seems to be a connection between the physical environment and a sense of belonging to the campus community (Banning & Strange, 2001). Through this study I explored the relationship between a student union and its impact on community building, guided by the following questions:

1. How and to what extent do the notions of community appear in the planning process of a student union?

2. How are notions of community reflected in the use of the student union?

ACUI has articulated that community building is a central tenet of college unions (ACUI, 2012a). “As the hub of campus life, the college union is, by its nature, an expression of people,
their related academic lifestyles, and ultimately a reflection of our culture” (Knell & Latta, 2006, p. ix).

**Study Rationale**

Research on student unions and their role in community building is limited. Knowing the impact of physical space on social and intellectual interactions can provide university decision makers with insight in planning, renovation, or repurposing facilities on a college campus. Understanding the relationship between students and the physical space is a critical asset to campus planners, administrators, and fundraisers. Further, knowing more about this topic will help in the effective design of the post-occupancy evaluations that use campus ecology theory to determine the congruence between the use of the physical space and the original design and intent (Baird, Gray, Isaacs, Kernohn, & McIndoe, 1996; Banning, 2012; Friedman, Zimming, & Zube, 1978; Preiser, 1989; van da Voordt & van Wegen, 2005). This case study can inform designers of student unions about the impact of physical space on community building.

**Definition of Terms**

The terms, used throughout this study, have been defined in the following manner:

1. Organic Community: “environments and spaces that encourage the patterns of belonging and allow people to connect naturally in all kinds of ways” (Myers, 2007, p. 47). In the context of Myers’ (2007) organic community,
   a. inclusion is defined as the sense of belonging that comes from being part of something larger than yourself and
   b. engagement is defined as the opportunity to connect with others and be involved in organizations or activities.
2. Campus Ecology: “the behavioral study of the complex transactional relationships among the social and physical dimensions of campus environments and those who inhabit them – students, staff, faculty, and visitors” (Banning, 2012, para. 5).

3. Physical Space: the facilities, grounds, and artifacts along with the non-verbal messages about their functionality and symbolism that define the campus (Strange & Banning, 2001).

4. Student Union: “the community center of the college, serving students, faculty, staff, alumni, and guests. …An organization offering a variety of programs, activities, services, and facilities that, when taken together, represent a well-considered plan for the community life of the college” (ACUI, 2009, para. 1).

**Overview of Dissertation**

This dissertation began with an overview of the case study in chapter one. I proposed the importance of understanding the role that purposeful design of physical space can have on campus community and specifically on community for students. The statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, and definition of terms were also offered. In chapter two, I will present a review of the literature in four areas: the architectural planning and evaluation process, the concept of community, the role of the college student union, and theories of developmental and campus ecology. In chapter three, I discuss the methodology, research design, data collection, data analysis, and limitations. In chapter four, I present the results of the study and summarize the findings. In chapter five, I discuss the implications of the study and for practice in student affairs and future research followed by my overall conclusion.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Students have many opportunities to establish new connections on campus throughout their academic career. These connections can be the start of more meaningful relationships that contribute to students’ sense of belonging. Students begin to build their relationships both in and outside the classroom, where social interactions occur organically and through structured programs and services. The physical space in which social interactions and programs take place can serve as a catalyst or a deterrent in the outcome of these connections. A college campus generally has locations where students prefer to gather for sporting events, social activities, and entertainment. Likewise, students may naturally be drawn to a physical space due to its location on campus and the amenities it provides like food service, study and leisure space, and/or visibility. Understanding the contribution of physical space in fostering social interactions and its enhancement to building community for students is central to the research questions in this case study. In this chapter I provide a review of the literature on designing and evaluating physical spaces, the concepts of community, student unions within the United States, and environmental models and ecology theories. Through the review of the literature I demonstrate a gap in the research on the impact of physical space in a student union on the enhancement of campus community for students.

Designing and Evaluating Physical Spaces

The literature of design and evaluation frames a process by which the human experience within a space is developed, built, and reviewed. “If there is no appreciation or understanding of the human experience in a structured space, it demonstrates the [lack of] value placed on the actual space and its purpose” (Block, 2009, p. 162). In the design process, the planning phase uses the architectural influences to define how the space will be used. The evaluation process
utilizes an architectural tool known as the post-occupancy evaluation which assesses all aspects of a physical space (i.e., building, offices, and outdoor mall). In this case study, I explored how notions of community are demonstrated in the newly designed spaces of a student union through the planning, design, and evaluation of the student union. In addition, it provides an understanding of the facility design and is an effective tool to evaluate the intersectionality of physical space, impact on the student interactions, and sense of community.

An Architect’s Planning Stages

Connecting the concepts of design to the purpose of the facility is an important component of the planning stages of architectural design (Friedmann, Zimring, & Zube, 1978; van der Voordt & van Wegen, 2005; Cuff & Wriedt, 2010). The planning stages are “exploratory, programme identification, design specification, and use and management” (van der Voordt & van Wegan, 2005, pp. 8-9). In the exploratory phase, the architect attempts to determine purpose and function of the organization(s) that will be in the space and the main requirements needed from the space (p. 8). The second stage is the programme, which includes identifying the types of space for particular programs and functions and learning about the various uses of the space (p. 9). The third phase is creating congruence between the design and functionality of the physical space. “Often all kinds of design variants are possible, each satisfying the programme of requirements but leading to a radically different quality of use” (p. 9). The fourth stage focuses on the impact of the “choice of materials and detailing on quality of use” within the physical space (p. 9). The final phase of the process is the post occupancy evaluation to determine whether the building functions as designed and to collect data that could influence future building projects.
Design Influences

The literature offers four influences of architecture on behavior: determinism, probabilism, possibilism and, pattern language (Devlin, 2010; Bell, Fisher, Baum, & Green, 1990; Ellen, 1982; Alexander, 1979; Porteus, 1977). Determinism is the way the design of a physical space, through the placement of doors, hallways, furniture, and other artifacts, influences the behavior of those in the space to use the space as designed. For example, if students move through a multiple-level classroom building or student union as it was designed, utilizing the established pathways and hallways, then the architect has achieved architectural determinism. Unfortunately, architectural determinism is easier said than achieved based on human nature. For example, students typically create walking paths negating the established sidewalks if they perceive there is a faster or more efficient way to get from building to building. The redefining of space or pathways is also seen in lounge spaces and classrooms when students rearrange designed spaces by moving tables and chairs around or repositioning lounge furniture to better meet their personal needs.

The second influence is probabilism which takes into consideration that student behavior is not predictable, but that there are probable scenarios that can be achieved with thoughtful facility design (Ellen, 1982). In the design phase of a student union, it is important to define what features are important to students to attract them throughout the new facility. For example, if students see value in easily being seen by others while walking through a space, then lounge spaces should be designed and placed in large open areas or surrounded by glass walls for easy viewing.

The third influence is architectural possibilism, which may be the easiest to achieve in that there are no predetermined responses to the placement of furniture, walls, windows, and
other key artifacts because it is possible that any of the configurations will impact students. For example, a lounge designed for student use with lightweight, flexible, easily moved furniture creates a multiple-use space so that students can re-arrange the furniture for individual or group work, a speaker, and maybe even low-key leisure activities.

A fourth influence is an architectural concept known as pattern language that refers to the way individuals typically move through physical space (Alexander, 1979). Pattern language is about the interconnectedness between the individual(s) and their use of the space. Similar to the planning process, pattern language is about exploring what goes into the creation of the relationship between the environment and its constituents (Alexander, 1979). In understanding the typical amenities of constructed space and who uses the space, Alexander identified these entities as patterns. Each of the patterns interacts with the other patterns that create the space, and it is this interaction that Alexander refers to as the “language” between them. Alexander (1979) provides a series of pattern languages to describe how individuals move through the physical space. Alexander demonstrates how to purposefully design a facility or adjacent facilities to create congruence through various pattern languages between the design and use of the physical space. Purposefully planned space also serves as a catalyst in guiding individuals effectively and efficiently through the space.

Alexander (1979) points out the connections between the pattern languages in creating physical spaces where building and/or fostering community is supported and, in some cases, expected. Multiple pattern languages can provide a framework for a design of a physical space and the adjacency between multiple built environments. Alexander (1979) explores the timeless way in which homes, communities, and towns are created. “It is a process through which the order of a building…grows out directly from the inner nature of the people and the animals, and
plants, and matter which are in it” (p. 7). It is from an organic lens that Alexander speaks about
the creation of space; “it is, quite simply, the desire to make a part of nature, to complete a world
which is already made of mountains, streams, snowdrops, and stones, with something made by
us, as much as part of nature, and a part of our immediate surroundings” (p. 9). The use of
pattern languages in designing a student-centered facility establishes functionality and
congruence between intended design and actual use. The use of the pattern language supports
the literature on influences of architecture on behavior (Devlin, 2010; Bell, Fisher, Baum, &
Green, 1990; Porteus, 1977).

Although students may not always follow the designed pathways or use the space as
intended, understanding how they make meaning of physical space in relation to their ability to
connect with others is beneficial for architects and administrators. The design influences of
determinism, probabilism, and possibilism along with Alexander’s pattern language provides an
understanding on how physical space may impact the programs and activities facilitated within
physical space.

**Evaluation of Design**

Studying the congruence between how space is being used in relation to the original
design and intent provides additional insight on how best to support those who are in the space.
In this section, I review the of post-occupancy evaluations as a way to describe this congruence.
“In the world of architecture, evaluation is mainly concerned with establishing the value of all or
part of the built environment (product evaluation) or the process of construction management
(process evaluation)” (van der Voordt & van Wegen, 2005, p. 141). It is critical to understand
how the space is being used and the level of congruence with the intended purpose in order to
provide insight on adapting it if change is needed, either to enhance the opportunities for making connections or for a greater positive impact on the activities taking place within the space.

The primary function of the post-occupancy evaluation (POE) is determining the overall satisfaction of the individuals using the space regarding the built-environment. The POE could address general use of space, aesthetics, functionality, materials used in construction, and/or furniture, among other areas. A strong POE relies on “a thorough performance evaluation in different phases of the planning process” (van der Voordt & van Wegen, 2005, p. 164). The ongoing use of the POE fosters a comprehensive understanding of the built-environment.

The secondary purpose of the POE is to review the space by taking into consideration the complex functionality of the integrated systems in one facility (Preiser, 1989). Loftness, Hartkopf, and Mill (1989) speak in general about the need for the POE to study the performance qualities of the facility in an integrated setting, making reference to the “physiological, psychological, sociological, and economic acceptability” (p. 153) of the space for the individuals using the space. A POE can be used to determine how the physical space is being used and whether the actual use is congruent with the original design and intent (van der Voordt & van Wegen, 2005; Baird, Gray, Isaacs, Kernohn, & McIndoe, 1996; Preiser, 1989; Friedman, Zimming, & Zube, 1978). In the case of the student union, many areas may have completely different designs based on function and could benefit from a POE: administrative office space, student organization space, meeting rooms, gathering spaces, quiet lounges, media or socially focused lounges, dining areas, art gallery and/or a games room to name a few. Although the literature reveals the applicability of a POE, there is a lack of literature of recorded use of the POE in student unions. The “evaluation allows lessons to be learnt which could lead to an improvement in the project under investigation and more generally improve the quality of
programming, designing, building and management of the built environment” (van der Voordt & van Wegan, 2005, p. 142).

In this case study, I explored how components of community appear in the planning phases of the design and how they are demonstrated in the renovated and expanded student union. Architectural planning stages provide insight on the important connections between design and actual use of space, particularly the POE. In the next section of the literature review, I turn to the concept of campus community. I present the specific components of community, the importance of community on the campus, and the concept of fostering community.

**Understanding Campus Community**

Much has been written about the many aspects of campus community.

If the metaphor of community runs deep in American higher education it is because the term evokes both the central aspiration of a social and moral order grounded in the reconciliation of the individual and society and the yearning for an academic experience that connects the [student] to the ideas, to other [students], and ultimately to society. (Spitzberg & Thorndike, 1992, p. 3)

The academic experience provides opportunities for students to make connections through active involvement in the classroom ranging from group projects to research activities. Likewise, it is important for the university to foster opportunities for students to make connections outside the classroom through the co-curricular experience, which contribute to the campus community.

One aspect of community is inclusion. Students want to feel that they belong in various shared spaces throughout the campus and that they are not trespassing in someone else’s space. This sense of belonging, reinforced through positive relationships with their peers, faculty, and staff, contributes to students’ ownership in their college experiences (Pascarella & Terenzini,
A second aspect of community is engagement. The university’s collective efforts to support positive engagement and the outcome of those positive relationships contribute to the building of community. To provide a framework for community in the context of this study, a definition of community, the importance of community on the campus, and the concept of fostering community are presented next.

**Defining Community**

In cultivating an authentic environment, the university provides students opportunities to build connections organically over time through common experiences (Myers, 2007). Myers (2007) defines an organic community as one that “creates environments and spaces that encourage the patterns of belonging and allows people to connect naturally in all kinds of ways” (p. 47). The environments and physical spaces of the university are critical in providing the conceptual boundaries in which students socialize, study, and work. The physical spaces establish locations where students feel a sense of belonging. As an example, Howe’s (1964) definition of community is both geographical (place) and functional: “a community is a system that has interdependent components which function together to maintain itself, to grow, to divide tasks of labor, to set and protect boundaries and to perform other systemic tasks” (p. 17).

Another example with no emphasis on the physical space but greater synergy on the relationship of those in the community is Bickford and Wright’s (2006) definition of community. Bickford and Wright (2006) state “a community is a group of people with a common purpose, shared values and agreement on goals. A community has the power to motivate its members to exceptional performance” (p. 42). This common thread of relationship building is about creating the opportunity for individuals to “find places and groups where they feel that sense of connection” (Braskamp, Trautvetter, & Ward, 2006, p. 150). Myers’ (2007) organic community
serves as complement to these two definitions by embracing individuals in their respective development of a sense of belonging while fostering a community that welcomes individual engagement when the person seeks greater connections/involvement. For this study, community is defined in the context of Myers’ (2007) organic community with the concepts of inclusion and engagement. Inclusion is defined as the sense of belonging that comes from being part of something larger than yourself and engagement as the opportunity to connect with others and be involved in organizations or activities.

**Importance of Community**

To further support and sustain campus community, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching explored the way campus community is built in *In Search for Community* (Boyer, 1990). This work provided context on campus community with the following vision:

…a larger, more integrative vision of community in higher education, one that focuses not on the length of time students spend on campus, but on the quality of the encounter, and relates not only to social activities, but to the classroom, too. The goal as we see it is to clarify both academic and civic standard, and above all, to define with some precision the enduring value that undergird a community of learning. (p. 7)

Boyer (1990) also identified six principles to guide the development of campus community: “purposeful, open, just, disciplined, caring and celebrative” (p. xx). In establishing a campus environment for students to engage in effective educational practices, such as service learning, undergraduate research, and learning communities, the university should nourish the students’ primal sense of belonging and feeling of connection (Boyer, 1987; Kuh et al, 1991). The sense
of belonging and feeling of connection serves as positive catalysts in the building of campus community.

The goal for an institution is to use the strength of the student and campus community to “build the social fabric and transform the isolation within our communities into connectedness and caring for the whole” (Block, 2009, p. 177). “Whether [students] realize it or not, they are searching for a community in which they will have a sense of belonging and a connection to the overall campus community” (McDonald, 2002, p. 145). The literature on student involvement provides the context for the importance of positive engagement in a campus community (Astin, 1968, 1993a, 1993b; Boyer 1987, 1990; Braskamp, Trautvetter, & Ward, 2006; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuch, & Whitt, 2005; Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005; Spitzberg & Thorndike, 1992). Building community is a conscious and continuous activity by the institution. Involvement in high impact educational activities over the duration of the college experience has positive results on students’ success and degree attainment (Kuh, 2008).

To understand the importance of community, it is imperative to comprehend the impact of the student experience in creating positive connections between students and their environments. Cheng (2004) designed a survey to “better understand students’ unique experiences at the institution, their level of satisfaction with what the institution has to offer and how it delivers what it offers, and students’ feelings and attitude toward the issues concerning campus community” (p. 220). Cheng sought to determine students’ perception of their institution as a community and/or what part of “college life” made a difference in developing that sense of a campus community. The study demonstrated the importance of social connections, a sense of belonging, and significance of acceptance along with the quality of a
social life. Although the findings of Cheng’s study support the idea that physical space can contribute to building a sense of community, a limitation of this research is that the only physical space referred to was residence halls.

Cheng provides insight on variables that contribute to students’ sense of community on a college campus. The importance of encouraging students to make connections both in and outside of the academic experience, like in the residence halls and through activities at the student union, contributed to students’ sense of belonging. Providing the necessary support for this involvement among students also contributed to building campus community.

**Fostering Community**

Although there are generally no requirements for students to be involved on a college campus, both human and systematic catalysts actively engage students at various levels with one another and their campus environment. Efforts by university leaders to provide a welcoming campus environment are important since “a strong sense of community [is] one of the many factors for students to consider when selecting an institution” (McDonald, 2002, p. 146). For example, new students might indicate that a campus feels right and they feel included because of the social activities in the evenings and on the weekends along the presence of with up-to-date student-centered facilities like residence halls, recreation centers, and student unions. Returning students, on the other hand, may sense that the university supports their growing engagement through student organizations, student-centered facilities, internship opportunities, and research opportunities with faculty. Identifying “the connections between individuals and the multiple sub-communities within the community as a whole” begins to provide the framework of the campus community (Spitzberg & Thorndike, 1992, p. xv).
The university also provides structured activities within orientation, first-year experience programs, on-campus employment, and leadership roles for students to develop positive, meaningful connections. The various connections developed between students through their activities are a demonstration of the human systems working to build relationships between individuals and the larger campus community (Block, 2009). In building these campus connections, the institution fosters an open and organic community where students are both encouraged and supported to explore ways to connect.

The interface of students and their environments offers the social context for community (Bickford & Wright, 2006). Having physical spaces on campus where the university can foster these connections is critical. In this study, the specific environment on a college campus that was explored was a student union. In the next section of this chapter, I outline the history of student unions in the United States and the role student unions have in building campus community.

**Student Unions in the United States**

The third area of literature is the role of the student union on the college campus in the United States. The idea of the student union began at Oxford University in 1823 as a place “for discussion and debate at a time when the free exchange of ideas” was not a common practice in the classrooms (the Oxford Union, n.d.). The first union at an American school dates back to 1895 (Butts, 1971) when the “University Club of Boston put out an invitation for an informal meeting to discuss the option of organizing at Harvard” (p. 9). Thelin (2004) speaks of the emergence of the college student union as “the architectural legacy of the expanded student body in the early 1900s [which] provided an alternative to the eating clubs and secret societies” (p. 192) that excluded large numbers of students. Since their inception, student unions were a
destination for students to come together. Student unions, initially used for debate activities, transformed into campus community centers where all students were welcome and various programs and activities took place. Building community for students took place in the student union. These student-centered facilities became one of the “first means by which college officials sought to reduce the dispersion of students into residential cliques” (Thelin, 2004, p. 193).

The Early Student Union

At the turn of the twentieth century, student unions became a nationwide phenomenon in providing a physical location for all students to come together regardless of where they lived or their socioeconomic status (Thelin, 2004). “The liberal arts ideal of education of the whole person calls college and university faculty and administrators to provide facilities that offer opportunities for the development of physically healthy lifestyles and constructive leisure time” (Bonfiglio, 2004, p. 28). These university-built environments have served as gathering places for students and are typically centralized locations on the campus for the convenience of food service, meeting rooms, and leisure spaces. “On many campuses, student unions serve as the hub of the multifaceted world [with] … many extracurricular activities organized by both the institution and student run” (Spitzberger & Thorndike, 1992, p. 148).

Student unions serve as a gathering space for students on the college campus. Oldenburg (2001) provides context on the importance of gathering spaces and refers to them as the “third place” with individuals’ first place being their home and the second place their work place. For college students, their first place could range from living with their parents, in an off-campus apartment, or in a residence hall. Their second place would be their classrooms, laboratories, and actual places of employment while attending college. The third place is where students go to gather and connect with others, socialize, and be part of a community. The physical space of the
student union serves as a third place where social interactions take place and community is fostered.

The Role of the Student Union

Not long after student unions became more common on the college campus, one of the oldest associations in higher education emerged. In 1914, students from seven Midwestern universities gathered to compare what types of activities were occurring on their respective campuses, and through that meeting the Association of College and University Unions was founded (ACUI, 2008). The name changed to the Association of College Unions in 1931 and again in 1968 to the Association of College Unions-International. In 1996, the decision to drop the hyphen was adopted and the name has been the Association of College Unions International (ACUI) since that date (ACUI, 2013). The founding institutions included Case School of Applied Sciences at Cleveland (now Case Western Reserve University), University of Illinois, Indiana University, University of Michigan, The Ohio State University, Purdue University, and University of Wisconsin. Over its storied hundred-year history, ACUI has become a knowledge-based association for campus community builders; the membership consists of students and professionals working in college unions and student activities.

Typically, student unions are referred to as locations where activities take place (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Penn, 2010; Kuh et al, 2005; Thelin, 2004), and ACUI has provided a number of publications to articulate the student union story. For example, The College Union Idea (Butts, 1971) provides anecdotes about the student union, its importance to the university and the student experience, and its impact on fostering community. In the second preface of the second edition of The College Union Idea (Butts, Beltramini, Bourassa, Connelly, Meyer, Mitchell, Smith, & Willis, 2012), the editors recognize that lack of other substantial publications
framing and recording “the philosophy and evolution of the college union” (p. 8). Additional ACUI publications provide insight on the multifaceted construction process of a student union, define the role of the college union on campus, and document most of the recently constructed student union facilities through images. Each publication validates the relevance of the role of the college union through its own words and images:

The union is the community center of the college, serving students, faculty, staff, alumni, and guests. By whatever form or name, a college union is an organization offering a variety of programs, activities, services, and facilities that, when taken together, represent a well-considered plan for the community life of the college.

(ACUI, 2009, para. 1)

Student-centered facilities, such as student unions, can “have a positive effect on student involvement and learning and often contribute to the development of a sense of community on campus” (Bonfiglio, 2004, p. 27). Although there are dissertations on college unions in relationship to student engagement, higher education fiscal management, and technology, there is a void in the research regarding how the physical environment of the student union interfaces with building a sense of community on campus (DeSawal & Yakaboski, 2013).

**Physical Space within the Context of the Community**

Many facilities across the campus are designed to support academic, social and, sometimes, cultural functions. In exploring the relationship that physical space may have with campus community, one area of research is related to environments and how built environments influence individuals who use the spaces (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The literature as it defines the interface between students and their environments is explained through person-
environment interactions models along with theories in human ecology, development ecology, and campus ecology.

**Person-Environment Interaction Models**

The person-environment interaction models “focus on the external environment, whether natural or man-made, and on how it shapes behavior by permitting some activities while limiting or preventing others” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 47). There are four types of person-environment interaction models and they are identified as physical, human aggregate, organizational, and constructed environments. “The models provide the context for how students maneuver through the physical environment of the campus” (Strange & Banning, 2001, p. 7).

The physical person-environment interaction model demonstrates the adjacency of particular buildings that can create the sense of neighborhoods while the corridors in a series of residence halls or academic buildings can direct the flow of individuals in to and out of the facilities. In the development of a campus master plan, the placement of buildings may influence the types of activities that take place in certain areas of the campus. The actual physical environments on a college campus can also be predictors of behavior or serve as behavior settings (Barker, 1968; Barker & Associates, 1978). For example, an old apartment complex on the edge of campus, in comparison with the library, can project different assumed behavior by individuals who occupy the space. The behavior setting of the old apartment complex may imply opportunities for loud social events due to its off-campus location whereas the library, typically placed somewhere in the middle of campus and adjacent to other academic facilities, supports a more subdued environment for studying. The physical space is also impacted by the artifacts within it, which can convey very powerful silent messages (Banning & Strange, 2001). Similar to a home, artifacts in a community space are selected to showcase its history, alumni, and leaders along
with a physical display of what the institution values. From the art on the wall to the color scheme throughout a facility, such artifacts demonstrate an institution’s commitment to its rich history, cultural diversity, and/or school spirit. In addition, appearance can have an impact on how the space is used (Bechtel & Zeisel, 1987). If a physical space is noticeably suffering from deferred maintenance or the grounds around the space are overgrown and the sidewalks or pathways are in need of repair, the physical appearance tells a nonverbal story about the value placed on the space by the institution.

The second model is the human aggregate model (Astin, 1968, 1993b; Holland, 1966, 1973; Kuh, Hu, & Vesper, 2000; Strange & Banning, 2001). “Authors of human aggregate models describe an environment and its influence in terms of the aggregate characteristics of its occupants” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 47). Through their collective characteristics and behaviors, the individuals or organizations using the space influence how others outside of the group or organization perceive the space (Strange & Banning, 2001). The perception of a physical space can be altered with a change in who is using it and the type of events or meetings being hosted by different student organizations. The historical use of a particular space can create a perception of its purpose. With new occupants, a residence hall or student union lounge can be perceived very differently from year to year. For example, if the collective behavior of a group of students is more subdued versus very gregarious and socially-engaged, then the space may be perceived as being for quiet activities like studying.

The third model is organizational environments, and its focus is on the relationship of the organization and the physical space it inhabits. Strange and Banning (2001) understood the organizational structure of the environment to include policies and procedures, attitudes about efficiency and productivity, and protocols regarding hierarchy and formality. In a student union,
the facility is typically considered the university’s living room and all members and organizations of the campus community are welcomed and encouraged to use the shared or common space. In addition to student organizations using the space, the student union traditionally houses any number of auxiliary services like a bookstore, a convenience store, and/or a food court along with administrative offices that support student programming and activities. There are, at times, tenants such as health services, an art gallery, admissions, and financial aid offices. These entities do not necessarily have the same core purpose, goals, and values, but still desire use of office space within the student union to serve members of the campus community. The student union’s policies and procedures may not reflect those of the respective entities housed within the facility. Although not all tenants of the student union share the same goals or overarching purpose, their placement in the student union facility demonstrates an organizational environment by the institution, which supports their respective missions (Stewart, 2012).

The last model is the constructed environment, and it can be subdivided into three areas: environmental press, social climate, and campus cultures. The environmental press describes how an individual student or student organization will respond in an environment based on the established collective activities and interpersonal interactions that have historically taken place within that environment. The environmental press is explained through the Need Press Model (Stern, 1970), which is an extension and elaboration of the theory presented by Lewin (1936) and Murray (1938). The key concepts are individual or personal needs and press, which is the environment; the need and press are related through three primary assumptions of the model (Stern, 1964; Walsh, 1973). First, behavior is a function of the individual and the environment: \( B = f(P, E) \). Second, the person is represented in terms of needs (organizational tendencies that
seem to give unity and direction to a person’s behavior), which are inferred from self-reported behavior. Third, the environment is defined in terms of press, which is inferred from the aggregate of self-reported perceptions or interpretations of the environment (Stern, 1970). Within this framework, behavior is studied as a function of the congruence of need (personal) and press (environment) or of the congruence between explicit press (stated purpose of an institution) and implicit press (perceived policies and practices as reported by constituents). Needs are inferred from students’ self-reported preferences for different kinds of activities. Although the concepts of need and press and Stern’s operationalization of them were intended to make possible investigations of the interaction of people and their environments, few studies have actually done so (Walsh, 1973).

It would be an over generalization to assume that all members of a particular student organization are alike, but it would be of interest to understand how “the environment plays an influential role in the behaviors and development of students and vice versa” (Lane, 2013, p. 12). Moos (1976) initially hypothesized that the environment affects the individuals who inhabit it via the “social climate.” Social climate is grounded in the theoretical work of Murray (1938), Lewin (1936), and Stern (1964, 1970) and parallels the study of organizational climate (Gavin & Howe, 1975; James & Jones, 1974; Murrell, 1973). In a study of social climate, Moos was interested primarily in the consensually perceived climate, which is measured by having respondents describe both the usual patterns of behavior that occur in the environment and their own subjective impressions of the environment. Moos and colleagues identified three broad clusters of social climate dimensions. These clusters are relationship dimensions (how people affiliate together, their involvement, and mutual support), personal development or goal orientation dimensions (the available opportunities for personal growth or task performance), and
system maintenance and system change dimensions (the extent to which the environment is orderly and clear in its expectations, maintains control, and is responsive to change) (Insel & Moos, 1974; Moos, 1974). Much of the empirical work of Moos and colleagues has involved the description of environment and study of the impact of various environments and social climate dimensions on inhabitants – that is, how dimensions of the environment affect attitude and behavior of inhabitants (Cronkite, Moos, & Finney, 1983; Keyser & Barling, 1981; Moos, 1974, 1979; Moos & Moos, 1981; Moos & Van Dort, 1979; Nielson & Moos, 1978).

For this case study, the person-environment interaction models provided context for the research questions on how community is demonstrated in the physical space of the student union. Each of the four person-environment interaction models can contribute to or deter the development of community for students in the student union. A review of the literature on ecological theories provides additional insight on the relationship between individuals and their environments and contributes to the theoretical construct for the case study.

**Ecological Theories**

*Ecology* is defined by *The American Heritage Dictionary* (2003) as the “science of the relationships between organisms and their environments” and “the branch of sociology that studies the relationship between human groups and their physical and social environments.” “Ecological models provide a way of understanding how a student interacts with the campus environment to promote a particular identity” (Evans, et al, 2010, p. 159). In this case study, understanding the impact of physical space on student interactions within a student union contributes to the evidence on how community is fostered through the physical space of a student union. The literature on the ecological theories can be explained in three areas: human, developmental, and campus.
Human ecology theory explores the interactions of humans with their environments while considering this relationship as a system (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993). In this theoretical framework, biological, social, and physical aspects of humans are considered within the context of their environments. Humans can be defined as individuals, groups, and societies while the environments are human-built environments, the social-cultural environment, and the natural physical-biological environments (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993). In the context of the college campus, individuals can be students, faculty, or staff; groups can be student organizations, students in the same academic major or class, student employees from the same department or members of an athletic team; societies could be the entire student body, the faculty, or the staff in general. The built environments are the student union and other physical structures such as residence halls, recreation centers, classroom buildings, and the library. The social-cultural environment is shaped by the demographics of the individuals and the values of the institution within the system. The natural physical-biological environments could include the weather or the geographical location of the institution and conditions within the physical environments such as the temperature of the classroom buildings or lights across the campus property.

Human ecology explains how individuals adapt to multiple environments to survive (Steward, 1955). The theory can be demonstrated through the interaction between individuals influenced by the surrounding social-cultural elements and by individuals making changes in their built environments or adapting to the physical-biological environments. Students’ interactions with one another tend to be more socially charged at an athletic event or outdoor carnival compared to how they choose to behave while attending an academic lecture. Not only are students responding to the type of activity they are attending and the perceived acceptable norms, they are also responding based on the collective behavior of those around them and the
defined use of the physical setting. Another demonstration of the human ecology theory in respect to adaptation can be the creation of an alternative location for an outside event in case of inclement weather due to the adaptation of the event to an indoor ballroom.

The second ecological theory is developmental ecology. Bronfenbrenner’s model of Process-Person-Context-Time was developed over decades (1977, 1979, 1989, 1993), and “it connects the influences of individuals (person), their experience and reactions to their environments (process), their exchanges within immediate surroundings (context), and developmental change occurring during specific historical events (time)” (Lane, 2013, p. 13). Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) present process as “encompassing particular forms of interaction between organisms and environment” (p. 795) for encouraging and achieving human development. This model explores the impact on human development through process, person, context, and time. The developmental ecology model could be used to influence policy for the improvement of campus living and learning environments (Renn & Arnold, 2003) and provide context on the relationship of the physical space of the student union and the students who engage within the constructed environment (Lane, 2013).

As demonstrated in the model, Bronfenbrenner (1993) outlines three concentric circles as the mesosystem, the exosystem, and finally the macrosystem. Within the initial circle, the mesosystem, there are microsystems that interface with the individual independently and represent a variety of relationships and activities that determine levels of engagement in the immediate environment around the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1993). The microsystems surrounding an individual could be individual friendships or other members of a student group, individuals who serve on the same student employment work team, and/or parents of the student. The “mesosystem comprises linkages and processes taking place between two or more of the
The second concentric circle is the exosystem, which reflects the influences on the environment based on relationships between the microsystems within the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1993). In respect to a student union, a programming board and/or the policies that guide the use of the student union demonstrate the mesosystem. The remaining concentric circle is the macrosystem “consisting of the overarching pattern of micro-, meso-, exosystems characteristics” (p. 25) across the environment, which can influence all that is within the inner concentric circles. The macrosystem on a college campus and within the context of this study could be represented as historical trends both on and off the campus along with social forces (Renn & Arnold, 2003).

The fourth construct in the human development theory is time. Time implies the consistency or inconsistency of the interaction between the individual and other forces and the length or amount of time of the interactions (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). In the context of the student union, time may imply the frequency that the students use the student union and the types of activities they participated in while in the student union throughout their time at the university (Lane, 2013).

“Developmental ecology considers interaction between individuals and their developmental context, but it focuses attention on the individuals rather than the cultures in which they are embedded” (Evans et al, 2010, p. 160). Renn and Arnold (2003) conceptualize the model from a college student development framework, and Lane (2013) outlines the new model from a student union perspective to present the applicability of the theory to support student development. Developmental ecology is an important theory to understand, but it is limited in providing context on the relationship between physical space and community.
Although developmental ecology outlines the relationships between the individuals, the activities, and policies within the systems, there is little context in respect to the physical space where these systems interface.

The third ecology theory may be the most applicable for physical spaces like student unions, recreation centers, and residence halls. “Campus ecology was introduced to student affairs by Banning and Kaiser (1974) … [and it] assumed a substantial role in student development theory and student affairs administration through the 1970s and into the early 1980s” (Evans et al, 2010, p. 168). Campus ecology moves beyond the brick and mortar of a facility and takes into account the collective engagement between the physical space, the occupants, and the activities taking place within the space. Campus ecology provides the context on intersectionality of the physical space and the activities in which students participate within that space. For example, from a master planning perspective, campus ecology would provide the framework for “harmonious interplay of buildings, open space, programming, security, and layout [which] inspires confidence in parents, and a sense of well-being and motivation in prospective students [which] supports integrated planning that is holistic, systemic, and crosses functional and operational boundaries” (Geller & Corning, 2007, para. 4).

Physical space matters on a college campus and can have a direct impact on the campus community.

*In Campus ecology: A perspective for student affairs* (Banning, 1978), a framework is presented through six theoretical person/environment interaction perspectives that provide context for the students’ interactions and/or behavior in relation to the environment: (1) Barker's (1968) theory of behavior settings; (2) the subculture approach (Clark & Trow, 1966); (3) Holland's (1973) theory of personality types and model environments; (4) Stern's (1970) need x press = culture theory; (5) Moos' (1973, 1974) social climate dimensions; and (6) Pervin's (1968)
transactional approach. For the purpose of this case study, Holland’s, Moo’s and Pervin’s theories provide the most applicable understanding of campus ecology. For example, Holland (1973) placed emphasis on the congruence between the growth of the individual while in the environment. Although Holland focused on the physical space of a living and learning community in a residence hall, there are similarities in creating safe learning environments with a student union. For example the students would likely not exhibit behavior that would deter them from being engaged in either environment. Although Holland placed more emphasis on the individual’s behavior than the environment, Moos (1973) emphasizes the students’ perception of the physical climate and their ability to adapt to it. The theory focuses on the impact on the students’ behavior as “an outcome of environmental perceptions, personal characteristics, and their interaction in a dynamic system” (Evans et al, 2010, p. 170). Furthermore, Pervin’s (1968) work makes the assertion that “behavior can best be understood in terms of the interactions of transactions between the individual and the environment” (Walsh, 1978, p. 13). Individuals seek to find environments that they perceive will reduce the discrepancy between their ideal and perceived selves, placing a great deal of emphasis on the environments that will make them successful (Pervin, 1968). Each of these three theories supports the concept of campus ecology and its transactional relationship between the physical space and the activities in which students are involved.

The campus ecology theoretical framework outlines the relationship between the physical space and the individuals and activities taking place within the identified space. Strange and Banning’s (2001) Hierarchy of Environmental Purposes and Design, as outlined in *Educating by Design: Creating Campus Learning Environments That Work*, is based on a framework similar to Maslow’s (1970) Hierarchy of Needs model. The advancement from one level to the next is
solely based on achieving the lower level. The Hierarchy of Environmental Purposes and Design begins with a sense of security and belonging. Level two focuses on participation, engagement, and role taking; the third level is a culmination of the previous levels creating a sense of full membership in a community.

The relationship among the four components in the campus ecology theory and the Hierarchy of Environmental Purposes and Design is presented in Figure 2.1. The lower half of Figure 2.1 represents the four interconnected components of human environment: human characteristics, organizational structures, collective constructs, and physical environments (Moos, 1976; Strange & Banning, 2001). The four components shown in the diagram are interconnected through the double arrows demonstrating the fluidity between the components. The top of Figure 2.1 represents the Hierarchy of Environmental Purposes and Design and its three levels: security and belonging, engagement, and full membership in a community.

Although “campus ecology is the behavioral study of the complex transactional relationships among the social and physical dimensions of campus environments and those who inhabit them – students, staff, faculty, and visitors” (Banning, 2012, para. 5), the collective impact of the four components also influences the actual physical place. The interplay between those who use the space, how the space can be perceived and/or defined, the policies and protocols that guide its use, and the actual design and aesthetics create an environment that influences its use. Each component can contribute positively and/or negatively which, in turn, impacts the person-environment congruence (Strange & Banning, 2001, p. 59).
Strange and Banning (2001) recognize “that environments that offer inclusion and safety, and involve participants in significant and meaningful roles, fulfill two primary conditions for promoting learning, growth, and development: a sense of belonging and security and a mechanism for active engagement” (p. 159). The concepts of the Hierarchy of Environmental Purposes and Designs are directly associated with the campus environment and provide insight
into the causal relationship between physical space and behavior. Situated firmly in ecological systems theory, Strange and Banning’s (2001) model specifically considers the impact of the environment and physical spaces on the college student experience and the building of community.

The ecological theories provide the context for the way individuals respond to a wide range of variables when it comes to the physical environment. “Campus ecology represents a perspective for student affairs that shares the profession's longstanding concern for individual students, but incorporates in a more systematic manner the importance of environments and student environment transactions” (Banning, 1978, p. 5). The concepts associated with campus environment provide insight on the causal relationship between physical space and behavior. Student unions have long been known as the living room of the campus where students are encouraged to gather for social and intellectual interactions. The image of the living room suggests that the student union may also be a place to find solace, visit with friends, meet others for a meal, or to go to a program. The concept of the living room has a long tradition as a family gathering space to reconnect and reinforce the family unit. The student union, through its various shared spaces, is designed to serve a similar role for the campus community. The physical environment of a student union can influence and make a difference in terms of community building. The concepts and theories associated with the physical environment will continue to contribute to the on-going evolution of the college student union and other student-centered spaces.

**Conclusion**

This review of literature highlights the lack of current research on the union facility and its relationship to community and building community. The literature on identifying a sense of
community with student-centered physical spaces does not include the student unions or specifically demonstrate the impact of physical space on the building of community (Fraser, Treasgust, & Dennis, 1986; Gerst & Moos, 1972; Moos & Trickett, 1974; Pace, 1969; Pace & Stern, 1958; Schroeder, 1993). The literature provides a framework on how community supports, enhances, and/or builds that sense of connectedness for students with one another and also with the campus through the student union facility. The literature also demonstrates how community is a part of the college experience and how one can foster community through positive engagement and relationship building. The campus ecology construct and the influence of architectural design concepts provide context for the interconnectedness between the design of physical space where social interactions occur and community building. The POE is the instrument by which the physical space is evaluated, and the outcome of the evaluation should direct future programming and renovation of physical space.

This case study is framed by the theory of campus ecology (Banning, 2012) and the definition of organic community (Myers, 2007), and supported by the Hierarchal Model of Environmental Purposes and Design (Strange & Banning, 2001, p. 109) as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

Study Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Concepts</th>
<th>Physical space that provides for interaction/activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campus Ecology</td>
<td>Engagement in that space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic Community</td>
<td>Pattern of belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchal Model of Environmental Purposes and Design</td>
<td>A sense of ownership of a space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community building</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although campus ecology represents the relationship between the space, the individuals, and the activities, the concept of organic community helps to define how individuals may feel in the physical space and how individuals may choose to engage in the space. The four phases of the hierarchy model are the positive outcomes of the interactions in the space and feelings of the individuals who are both in and engaged in the physical space.

Through a case study analysis of the renovation and expansion of a student union, I intend to identify how the notions of community were represented in the planning and design process and in the physical spaces of the student union. The research from this case study will provide evidence to fill the gap between anecdotal explanations about community building and its relationship with student union facilities at institutions of higher education in the United States. In Chapter Three I present information regarding the methods used in this study.
Chapter Three: Methodology

In this case study I explore how the notions of community may have been present in the planning process during the design phase of a recently expanded and renovated student union and to what extent community was reflected in the use of the new space. In this chapter, I discuss the methodology, research design, data collection, and proposed data analysis. I conclude the chapter with limitations and a summary.

Research Design

Through a qualitative case study research design, I explored the completed work of a student union renovation and expansion planning committee. The qualitative case study research design also afforded me the opportunity to observe the use of the new spaces and to determine whether the activity in those spaces was congruent with the intention of the planning process. The questions guiding my research were as follows:

1. How and to what extent do the notions of community appear in the planning process of a student union?
2. How are notions of community reflected in the use of the student union?

Qualitative Approach

In studying how the physical space of a student union may enhance community, it is important to understand how the space was intentionally designed to support those outcomes and how the space is being used. “Qualitative research is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help to understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible” (Merriam, 1998, p. 5). There are five key characteristics of a qualitative approach: (1) the participants’ perspective; (2) the researcher serves as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis; (3) the study involves
fieldwork; (4) the use of an inductive research strategy; and (5) focus is on the process, meaning, and understanding (Stake, 1995; Merriam, 1998). The first characteristic is critical in developing a strong narrative from participants. Individuals who served on the planning or project committee were invited to participate in an interview (Appendix B). The email invitation provided an overview of my research and explained that as members of the planning or project committee they had a unique perspective to share on the project.

The second and third characteristics of a qualitative approach were achieved as I served as the primary instrument of data collection (Creswell, 2009). The two methods of data collection included interviews and observations. The interviews were with members of the planning and project committees and I used “open-ended questions so that the participants can best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings” (Creswell, 2008, p. 225). In additions, the questions guided this study were interpretive in nature and required an understanding of the experience of the planning committee members over time (Merriam, 1998). I also completed observations, with the assistance of a colleague, on the use of physical space by students from the campus community. Observing how students used the space allowed comparisons of the design with the actual outcomes.

Finally, the qualitative approach provided a better chance “to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspective and worldviews of the people involved” (Merriam, 1998, p. 11). In addition, the case study approach to inquiry was executed to explore and understand the specific planning process and use of the student union. The qualitative approach for this case study provided me the opportunity to make meaning of the participants’ narrative of the planning and design process in the expansion and renovation of the student union. It also allowed me to learn how individuals used the new physical space and in turn determine the level
of congruence between the planning and design and the occupancy of the space. The qualitative case study approach similarly provided an opening to determine whether the project achieved its desired outcomes.

Case Study

There are multiple forms of inquiry in qualitative research (Creswell, 2009). These include ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, narrative, and case study (Creswell, 2009). Each form of inquiry could provide insight into the relationship between the physical space of a student union and its role in enhancing a sense of community. The ethnography might be a used if I were curious about the institution’s long-range planning process and the impact of the culture of the campus planners or the institution. If I were most interested in the human experience in the planning process or how individuals and groups felt about the new space in the student union, then the phenomenology strategy would be applicable. This research study was not about developing a grounded theory since campus ecology provides the conceptual framework. “Case studies are the preferred method when (a) how and why questions are being posed, (b) then investigator has little control over events, and (c) the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon with in a real-life context” (Yin, 2003, p. 4). I chose the case study because I was interested in learning how notions of community may have evolved during the planning process and how they were reflected in the use of the new physical spaces.

The case study approach is an easily identified unit with boundaries that help to define what is and what is not being explored (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). The qualitative case study methodology is “an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., activity, an event, a process or an individual) based on extensive data collection” (Creswell, 2008, p. 636). Yin (2003) presents five applications of the case study: explain, describe, illustrate, explore, and meta-
evaluation. This case study was descriptive in that I used the narrative from the semi-structured interviews to describe the planning process and identify how the notions of community were incorporated into the process. The field notes from the observations provided me the opportunity to describe how individuals were using the spaces and how notions of community were demonstrated. This strategy provided the framework to explore how and to what extent the notions of community appeared in the planning process and how community was reflected in the use of the spaces. The qualitative case study allowed emphasis on an in-depth exploration through various data sources and permitted continuous data collection (Merriam, 1998).

**Researcher Bias**

It is essential to acknowledge the researcher’s worldview or epistemological underpinnings (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006) in a qualitative case study. As the primary source of data collection, I reflected on my beliefs and assumptions about student unions, the impact of the student union as a community center, the development of a sense of belonging, and the defining of and relationship between physical space and community building. This reflection was in the form of conversations with a local writing group in which I participated with colleagues who work in student union operations.

My experience with campus communities is extensive. As an undergraduate, I was active in my residence hall council and became a resident advisor during my junior and senior years. During my senior year, the very first student union at my university was built, and as part of my senior practicum for my major course work, I designed the student employment program for the new student union and assisted in the implementation of the program. One of the leading goals of the student employment program was to contribute to a sense of community in the student union. Following the completion of my master’s degree two years later, my first full-time
position was as a residence hall director at my alma mater. In each of these roles, creating and sustaining an inclusive and safe community was a priority.

Throughout the first twenty-five years of my career, each of my professional roles has been about contributing to the campus community through programs, services, and activities, either directly or indirectly. Also, the majority of positions I held were located in offices in a student union. My career includes the oversight in the construction of a student union and the creation of its infrastructure as its first director. The physical structure, services, and activities were intentionally planned and executed to enhance student involvement and build community. The opportunity to serve as an inaugural director of a brand new student union and as the national president of ACUI solidified my interest in this topic.

My undergraduate and graduate college experience, my twenty-five years as a college administrator, my commitment to building community in my various campus roles, specifically my former role as a student union director and two-term presidency of the ACUI, led me to this study. These collective experiences also create bias and assumptions, which are that student unions are much like community centers and they provide a destination point for students for programs, services, and activities. I am biased in my belief that student unions are safe and welcoming spaces for all students on the college campus, and that student unions serve as a catalyst for fostering community for students. I also assume that planning is intentional and focused on achieving an outcome that benefits the greater good for the campus community and specifically students. I recognize and acknowledge my biases and assumptions. Creswell (2008) encourages qualitative researchers to reflect systematically on who they are in the inquiry and to be sensitive to their personal biography and how it shapes the study.
Establishing trustworthiness for this study involved establishing internal and external validity for the data collection and analysis to yield findings worthy to contribute to scholarly society (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I identified an individual to conduct a peer debriefing to offer questions and perspectives on my data analysis (Creswell, 2009). I shared my notes with this individual to discuss my progress and eventually reviewed my approach to data collection and analysis with him. “This strategy - involving an interpretation beyond the researcher and invested in another person - adds validity to an account” (Creswell, p. 192). The peer “debriefer” was a college administrator with extensive experience in student unions who also served in a leadership capacity with the ACUI.

**Research Site**

The research conducted for this case study occurred at a four-year public urban university in one of the largest cities in the southwestern United States. The University of Houston (UH), founded in 1927, is unique as it is one of the most ethnically diverse major public research institutions in the nation with close to 40,000 undergraduate and graduate students (University of Houston, n.d.a). There are 12 academic colleges with a combined offering of 120 majors and minors for undergraduates and over 130 masters and 50+ doctoral programs (University of Houston, n.d.a). UH is proud of the faculty and student research being conducted through the 25 research centers and in the departments. In addition, the University’s student population is very diverse with no racial or ethnic majority, and an almost 50-50 balance in gender (University of Houston, n.d.b). Currently, UH has one of the larger student housing programs in the state.

In 2008, a new president arrived at the institution and, through written and verbal communication to the campus community proclaimed the institution poised for greatness. The new president sought out innovative ideas from all members of the campus community to assist
in shaping a vision in moving forward. During the first 100 days of the president’s tenure, over 11,000 suggestions were submitted electronically. In reporting back to the campus community, the new president identified four themes as a starting point. They were creating “a nationally competitive institution, utilizing students’ success as a measure of the university’s success, forging a strong partnership with the greater community, and expanding the arts and athletics environment for the region” (University of Houston, n.d.c).

Over the next few years, the president shared consistent communication with the campus community on the growth of the university with consistent increases in fall admissions along with significant financial commitments to new residence halls and facilities. In March 2010, the president shared a number of new initiatives to support student success and address a low 6-year graduation rate; the initiatives ranged from a realignment of admissions standards to competitive recruitment with scholarships, expanding The Honors College to providing educational global, research, and service-learning experiences, and deliver greater student support and services that match the institution’s commitment to student success (University of Houston, n.d.d). In April of the following year, the president spoke to the faculty senate about student success and the classroom experience using data provided by institutional research and the National Survey of Student Engagement (University of Houston, n.d.e). The president demonstrated the need to create more purposeful engagement for all students, but especially new students. In subsequent communications, the president articulated the focus on increased on-campus living opportunities; expanded academic programs; continuous recognition of highlighted programs, research, and civic contributions; and a multi-year $1 billion ongoing construction program that today includes nearly two dozen buildings and four million square feet of new and renovated construction.
This case study focused on one of those projects: the multi-year, $80-million-dollar renovation and expansion of the original 1967 student union.

The student union was approximately 247,625 gross square feet when it first opened, and for more than fifty years it has been a point of destination for dining, recreation, meetings, special events, and student activities on campus. The student union has served as the home for student organizations, the student government association, and many University offices and student services. It has housed food service, a bookstore, a ballroom, banking and retail centers, an open arbor, a variety of lounges and meeting rooms, and a game room with bowling. The original student union expanded in size and operation in 1973 and also opened a satellite operation. For close to a decade, the facility showed significant signs of wear and only benefited from only selective renovation efforts since its original opening.

The completion of the student union renovation and expansion in January 2015 established new and expanded services and amenities for the students and the campus community, in general. A number of highlights from the project include an expanded the number of lounges, a larger student organization space, a new 400+ seat auditorium, greater food service options, permanent space for multiple student-focused services, an increased number of meeting rooms with updated furniture and technology, and a new feeling of pride. The student union’s hours of operation were slightly adjusted following the completion of the project with the facility open seven days a week from 7:00 AM to midnight Monday through Wednesday and until 1:00 AM for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings. The hours of operation on Sunday begin at 1:00 PM and close at midnight. The new facility, which is adjacent to the original student union, is considered the expansion part of the project and houses the student organization space; the hours for this facility are closed to the general public at approximately 8 PM.
The student union expansion and renovation project is ideal for a qualitative case study. In narrowing the research questions to specifically explore how the notions of community may have emerged in the planning process along with identifying how the notions of community were demonstrated in the use of two specific spaces, the case study approach provided me the opportunity to explore campus ecology theory (Yin, 2009, p. 47). In addition, many colleges and universities represent their student unions as points of destination for programs, services, and activities. The student union also provides space for students to gather and connect with each other. The financial investments by universities to build, renovate, and or expand their student unions is typical (Yin, 2009, p. 48). The results of this case study provide a greater understanding on the importance of the planning process and the impact of purposeful space on fostering student community on the campus.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the four types of person-environment interactions models demonstrate how some behaviors can be fostered while other behaviors can be limited and even prevented (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Through this case study I specifically looked at two new spaces in the student union: the Monumental Stairway and the Student Organization Center. The Monumental Stairway is an open space where students can easily navigate through to move from one side of the student union to the other while also having access to multiple food services, support services and amenities (e.g., bookstore and a convenience store), with an opportunity to easily see others and find friends. The Student Organization Center is designed to directly support students engaged in student organizations by providing access to a meeting room, lounge space, and flexible work spaces. This narrow focus on the two spaces permitted more in depth opportunities during data collection to examine the connection between the physical space and activities of students in these two locations. As the
researcher, I was able to explore the notions of community both in the planning process and the use of the spaces. In the next section, I explain the approach to data collection.

Data Collection

To gain access to data sources, I identified a key informant. The individual who served in this capacity had been an administrator at the institution for 14 years and was associated with the renovation and expansion project of the student union. He previously served in a national leadership position within ACUI. The key informant provided the contact information for planning committee members and access to a majority of the secondary data sources for this study.

Data for this study came from two sources: 1) interviews conducted with members of the planning committee, and 2) observations on the use of space on and around the Monumental Stairway and the Student Organization Center.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The first source of data was the semi-structured interviews. I anticipated that the interviews would provide very rich narratives by the individuals involved in the planning and design stages of the project. Some of these same individuals remained engaged during the renovation and expansion of the student union as members of the project development team. An email invitation was sent to 26 individuals whose names were provided by the key informant. These individuals represented members of the institution’s facilities and construction staff (e.g., construction managers, designers, and planners), the Division of Student Affairs (e.g., student union and student activities professionals, and senior administrators), faculty, staff (e.g., from auxiliary services to administration and finance), and student leaders. There was a brief email
exchange with the 15 individuals who agreed to be interviewed explaining the interview protocol (Appendix A).

The interview protocol provided an opportunity to collect participant demographics and to answer questions relevant to the study before the start of the interview. To maintain confidentiality, individuals chose pseudonyms, and interviews were scheduled in such a manner that individuals did not come into contact with one another. The interview protocol was established to lead the participants through a series of question “using both clarifying probes and elaborating probes” (Creswell, 2008, p. 229). To learn as much detail on the planning process, the use of the guidelines in the process, the desires for the new space being planned, the extent to which community was discussed in the design of the space, the use of key concepts from both Banning’s definition of campus ecology theory (2012) and the Model of Environmental Purpose and Design (2001), and their respective perceptions of the Monumental Stairway and Student Organization Center. The questions were developed in those four general categories including the opportunity for the participants to describe their role and length of service to the project, and to share any additional insights on the project that may not have been discussed during the interview.

In developing the semi-structured interview questions, it was necessary to gain knowledge of the planning process, how it developed, and what contributed to it over time. Following the opening questions to learn how long the participant served on the committee and what their role at the University was at the time of the project, we reviewed the guidelines. The 2008 Master Planning Process document (Kenfield, 2013) identified the guidelines as the following:

1. Create a one-of-a-kind experience that epitomizes student life and student success,
2. Become the provider of choice for activities, services, and facilities for the campus community,
3. Foster a sense of place by enhanced formal and informal spaces,
4. Enhance the food service program,
5. Cultivate a convenient and centralized retail zone, and
6. Create a synergistic Student Organization Center.

Each participant was asked to describe how the guidelines were developed and used in the planning process. Although each of the participants recalled the guidelines, some participants acknowledged they were on the original team that created the guidelines. The participants’ responses varied on how they elaborated on the guidelines individually and collectively. The participants were then asked to describe the desired outcome of the new spaces and the degree to which the guidelines influenced those discussions. To provide an opportunity to expand my understanding of the participants’ goal for how the space might be used by the student community, I used clarifying follow up questions. Specifically, if the participant mentioned community in their response I asked them to share to what that meant to the respective participant and to the project in general. To learn about the notions of community, participants were asked to directly describe how community and/or community building was considered when designing the new spaces. As the researcher, I listened for key words from Banning & Strange’s (2001) Hierarchy of Environmental Purpose and Design matrix, such as safety, inclusion, involvement, and community.

The third category explored the participants’ perceptions of how the Monumental Stairway and Student Organization Center are used. The questions were intended to identify the congruence in their vision and planning with the actual use of the finished product.
The final category gave participants the opportunity to share anything about the project that may not have come up with the project in the interview. This allowed the participants to share any additional insight on their experience, the process, and the outcome of the project.

The semi-structured interviews provided the participants with a mechanism to share their voice and contribute to the narrative on both the planning process and how notions of community evolved in that process. The semi-structured interviews also provide an opportunity for me, as the researcher, to learn about intentionality in the planning process and how that manifested in the outcome of the final new spaces in the student center. The participants eagerly shared their thoughts and ideas on how the conceptual ideas materialized and the congruence in how students were using the Monumental Stairway and the Student Organization Center. In the next section, the demographics of the participants are described.

Participants

Fifteen individuals participated in the semi-structured interviews. They were from either the planning committee or the project committee, and the length of involvement depended on whether each was a student, a staff member, or an administrator. Of the 15 individuals, nine were undergraduate students during their engagement in the project and six were staff members or administrators. Surprisingly, there were no members of institution’s facilities or construction teams, nor were there any faculty. There was only non-Student Affairs staff member who agreed to participate in the interviews. Each of those groups of individuals were represented on the multi-year planning process and were engaged in the discussions when developing the guidelines and following the renovations and construction of the entire project. By the time of the interview, each of the student participants had graduated, and the majority was still in the greater Houston community. Of the six administrators and staff, all were employed at the UH at the
time of the interviews and excited to share their thoughts after the conclusion of the overall project. The demographics of the individuals were relatively diverse (e.g., race/ethnicity, age, length of service to the project and at the University), but more heavily male (11) than female (4). The characteristics of the 15 individuals were as follows (Table 2):
Table 2

*Characteristics of the participants from the semi-structure interviews*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender Race</th>
<th>Status During the Planning Process</th>
<th>Status during the Interview</th>
<th>Length of Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>Male Caucasian</td>
<td>Student Entry Level</td>
<td>Alumnus</td>
<td>2007-2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nico</td>
<td>Female Asian</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Alumna</td>
<td>2012 - 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William</td>
<td>Male Caucasian</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>2007-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ed</td>
<td>Male African American</td>
<td>Senior Administrator</td>
<td>Senior Administrator</td>
<td>2007-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craig</td>
<td>Male Caucasian</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Alumnus</td>
<td>2008-2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie</td>
<td>Female Asian</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Alumna</td>
<td>2011-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JR</td>
<td>Male Asian</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Development Officer</td>
<td>2008-2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosley</td>
<td>Male Caucasian</td>
<td>Staff/Project Manager</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>2007-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ella</td>
<td>Female Hispanic</td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>2007 - 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reginald</td>
<td>Male African American</td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>2009-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael J.</td>
<td>Male African American</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Alumnus</td>
<td>2011-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shasta</td>
<td>Male African American</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Alumnus</td>
<td>2007-2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynne</td>
<td>Female Caucasian</td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>2007 - 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.J.</td>
<td>Male Caucasian</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Alumni</td>
<td>2010-2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>Female Caucasian</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Alumna</td>
<td>2007-2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Following each interview, the recording was transcribed by a third party. The decision on the transcription format-style was made purposefully to reduce confusion between the participants’ statements and the whole interview. After reviewing the transcription, the document was sent to the respective individual for a review of the transcription content. I invited them to use the track changes function to document any changes. The purpose of the review of the transcription was to conduct member checks to ensure the accuracy of the transcription from the semi-structured interview (Creswell, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002).

**Observations**

Observations provided the second source of data collection with insight on how space was being used, by whom, and the frequency of the activities and the users. To accurately capture as much data as possible during the observation periods, a second observer was identified to assist the data collection. For this case study, I refer to her as "Ann." Ann had recently defended her dissertation and was familiar with the facility as well as with the renovation and expansion project.

Before the observations, Ann and I met to review the observation protocol (Appendix C), the two locations, and the various indicators (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, age, types of activities, duration of stay, interaction with others and so on) we recorded during the observations. The Monumental Stairway and the Student Organization Center were the locations where observations took place.

**Monumental Stairway**

The Monumental Stairway (see figure 2) is highly visible and considered an open gathering/lounge space in the central part of the renovated building. Before the renovation and expansion project, a three-story open arbor was in this same location with limited patio seating
on the lower level and some standing capacity on the main floor (ground floor) and second floor
surrounding the open area. The lower level was also available for reserved events as an outdoor
location. The Monumental Stairway was a focal point in the renovation and cannot be reserved.

Ann and I identified two different locations to capture as many of the activities and users
of the space during the observation periods. We determined it would be best if one of us was
located above the stairs looking down from one side but not directly at the top of the
Monumental Stairway. The second location was at the base of the stairs looking up. In neither
location did we want our presence to interfere with the users of the space and their activities.
Figure 2: Monumental Stairway, Student Union

Student Organization Center

The Student Organization Center (see Figures 3 and 4) is located in the new facility constructed directly behind the original student union. A majority of the departments, student organization spaces, and services located in this new facility were previously located in an underground space connected to the original student union through the lower level off of the
open atrium. The new facility is two stories high and the Student Organization Center is located on the first floor together with lounge space and two student-centered departments.

**Figure 3: Student Organization Center, Student Union**

With respect to the Student Organization Center, Ann and I walked through the space two or three times to explore different vantage points and possible obstructions to see all of the individuals in the space. We settled on rotating through the space with one of us going clockwise and the other counter-clockwise. We also determined that since we were both starting from the same spot (the west end of the space close to the main entrance) that we would rotate at different times and that we would each rotate at least twice through the space over a twenty-minute period.
**Figure 4: Student Organization Center, Student Union**

**Observation Logistics**

The observations were completed on two different days, and there were four observation periods on each day at both sites. This process was selected so that each observer recorded as much activity as possible and identified visual demographics of individuals in both locations. The day of the week and the time of the day for the observation periods were determined based on known information about space usage. First, the student union staff monitors the Monumental Stairway and the Student Organization Center along with tracking event and meeting room usage for all reservable locations via an event management system. Second, there are installed traffic counters at the four entry points of the Student Organization Center, and reports are available from the entry points. The two days were selected based on the historical activity in the overall Student Center based on meeting room reservation records, activities/events in the facility, and the number of individuals passing through the Student
Organization Center. This usage data indicated that the busier days in the Student Center were Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday and the slower days were traditionally Monday and Friday not including the weekend. In using the records on the traffic patterns coming in and out of the Student Organization Center, we determined that four 20-minute time periods with an additional 10 minutes to review and edit our field notes would provide the necessary time to collect enough data to compare each observation period. One set of observations was conducted on a Monday (a slow day) and one set of observations on a Tuesday (a busier day). The observation time periods on both days were as follows: 1) Monumental Stairway at 8:30-9:00 AM, 12:00-12:30 PM, 3:00-3:30 PM, and 6:30-7:00 PM, and 2) Student Organization Center at 9:00-9:30 AM, 12:40-1:10 PM, 3:30-4:00 PM, and 7:00-7:30 PM.

The field notes from the observations were transcribed by creating separate documents for each location and each day for a total of four documents. The observations were presented in two columns representing the two observers so that like time periods were side by side for review and comparison. To complete a member check, Ann received copies of her field notes and the final transcriptions to confirm that each of the transcriptions accurately captured what she observed. In comparing both sets of observations, Ann and I agreed that our collective observations were in sync and would provide the data needed for analysis.

Data Analysis

According to Creswell (2009), data analysis involves several elements: 1) organization, 2) preparation for analysis, 3) varied and multiple analyzes, 4) description and representation, and 5) interpretation. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews and observations. I served as the instrument for the collection of the primary data through semi-
structured interviews with members of the planning committee and observations of the Monumental Stairway and the Student Organization Center.

To begin data analysis, I listened to the audio recording and added thoughts and reactions to my initial notes when warranted. This permitted me to become increasingly familiar with the data and allowed me to incorporate emerging concepts into subsequent reviews (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). Using interviews and reviewing the audio recordings allowed me to hear the participants’ descriptions, explanations, and experiences in their own voices. Further, each interview was transcribed and reviewed. Then through the initial use of pre-coding, keywords and phrases were identified (Saldana, 2013). Upon completion of the analysis, I “organize[d] excerpts by themes by connecting threads and patterns” (Seidman, 1998, p. 107). I also conducted a member check by asking individuals to review the transcripts from their interviews for accuracy (Creswell, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002).

Following each observation, both Ann and I reviewed our field notes and added thoughts and reactions accordingly. Comparisons across the observation periods (e.g., morning, midday, late afternoon, and early evening) and the busy and less-than-busy days were also completed. I also conducted a member check by asking Ann to review the transcript from her field notes for accuracy and we compared our respective transcriptions for any similarities or differences (Creswell, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002).

**Code Development**

The data analysis included “connecting themes and descriptions along with interpreting the meaning of both” (p. 183). The initial use of pre-coding during the audio of and the transcriptions from the semi-structured interviews afforded me the opportunity to identify key words and phrases (Saldana, 2013). Also, it was important to capture the participants’ voices to
develop a comprehension of the participants’ respective experience when describing their engagement in the project. I also noted similar and outlier responses by participants.

The pre-coding efforts led to further data analysis utilizing deductive coding (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). The deductive coding provided context to align coded data with the first two categories having to do with the aspects of the planning process, the defining (or not defining) of community, and the use of the four terms and concepts from Strange and Banning’s (2012) model. In addition, the transcriptions were uploaded into Nvivo and organized by using the following codes:

1. Belonging
2. Purposeful (functional) space
3. Community
   a. Community: spaces that encourage the patterns of belonging
   b. Community Building: allow people to connect naturally in all kinds of ways
4. Intentionality
5. Foster Activity
6. Connections

In reviewing the data identified after coding, there were some natural linkages between the codes. The first grouping included a sense of belonging, purposeful space, and community as defined as spaces that encourage the patterns of belonging (Myers, 2007). The second group included intentionality (of space), fostering of activity, connections, and community building as defined as allowing people to connect naturally and in all kinds of ways (Myers, 2007). The process of theming the data (Saldana, 2013) or thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006) led to identifying Sense of Place and Gathering Space as the two prominent themes of the study.
Ethical Considerations

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Indiana University approved this study with the exemption. Given my status as a staff member at the University of Houston, the Institutional Review Board at the University of Houston also reviewed and approved this study with the exemption. This study adhered to the direction and guidelines outlined. Given the use of images of the facility in the study, my dissertation committee advised that the study did not need to be masked.

Several additional ethical considerations were achieved during the study (Creswell, 2008). First, participants’ names were only be used for scheduling the actual interviews and then were replaced by pseudonyms. The participants’ responses remained confidential throughout the study. Second, each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Third, data management included downloading all documents (e.g., hard copies of the signed consent forms, electronic files containing the audio interviews, and the written transcripts) and uploading the digitally recorded member check interviews using participants’ pseudonyms onto an external hard drive as a backup and securely stored off campus.

Credibility

Techniques during data collection and analysis demonstrate the credibility of the data. Creswell (2009) identifies activities that will increase the probability of credible findings, such as acknowledging bias during the case study process, acknowledging variables that may differ from the preferred findings, a balance of time during observation periods so as not interfere with individuals’ behaviors, and employing an external auditor to review process and data. Additionally, my experience as an administrator within student affairs at the level of the department director and above for over 15 years in a variety of settings and at four different
universities afforded me an opportunity to understand the participants’ responses and pose follow-up questions during the member checks.

My experiences were discussed with my debriefer throughout the study to acknowledge bias, impressions, and prompt reflections about each participant’s experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Richardson, 2000). This practice allowed me to understand how I perceived the data, analyze them, and chronicle my interactions with the participants. This additional data source is also a form of triangulation (Creswell, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002).

Limitations

There were several limitations to this case study. First, the participants who participated in the semi-structured interviews from the original planning teams were limited. Although there were fifteen individuals who participated in the semi-structured interviews, nine were undergraduate students during their engagement in the project and six were staff members or administrators. The voices that were not represented included the architects, members from the institution’s facilities and construction teams, and faculty members. In addition, there was only non-Student Affairs staff member who agreed to participate in the interviews. Additional narratives may have provided different perspectives on the development and use of the guidelines during the planning process, and also how notions of community may have evolved in the conversations of the committee. Second, the decision to focus specifically on the Monumental Stairway and the Student Organization Center in this case study limited the types of people and groups that were observed using the spaces. These two spaces were more amenable to students, which permitted me to explore the impact of physical space on student community, but also prevented me from seeing other members of the university community (e.g., faculty and staff) within those spaces. Third, the timing of the observations coupled with the number of days
observations were completed may have prevented witnessing some members of the campus community in using both the Monumental Stairway and the Student Organization Center. For example, some members of the faculty community are not on campus every day, nor do members of the staff frequent the student union at the same level as students. In addition, one of the observation days was a poor weather day on the campus with hard rains falling throughout the day; the weather, itself, may have prevented some individuals or groups from coming to the student union. Fourth, the data collected may have framed a more positive impact of the physical space on student community as compared to observing spaces with a higher probability of a more diverse population using the spaces (e.g., food court dining, lounges, and meeting rooms). The last limitation was the lack of a narrative of the actual users and non-users of the spaces. Additional semi-structured interviews or focus groups with individuals who used the Monumental Stairway and the Student Organization Center could have provided a very powerful narrative for identifying themes associated with this research study. Likewise, engaging with non-users (e.g., faculty, staff, and individuals with varying abilities such as sight or mobility) of the spaces may have provided insight on variables contributing to the relationship of physical space and community building from a more diverse lens.

**Conclusion**

Through this case study I explored the how the notions of community impacted the planning process and also how the notions of community may be reflected in the use of the student union, specifically in and around the Monumental Stairway and the Student Organization Center. In this chapter I presented the methodology used to collect and analyze the data. I present the findings from the research in chapter four and significance of my findings in chapter five, where I make recommendations for future practice and study.
Chapter Four: Findings

The purpose of this case study was to explore the influence of physical space of a student union on community building. As described in earlier chapters, this case study is framed by the theory of campus ecology (Banning, 2012) and the definition of organic community (Myers, 2007), supported by the Hierarchal Model of Environmental Purposes and Design (Strange & Banning, 2001) as outlined in figure 2.3 in chapter two. Although campus ecology represents the relationship between the space, individuals, and activities, the concept of organic community helps to define how individuals may feel in the physical space and choose to engage in the space.

Through the analysis of both the semi-structured interviews and observations two themes emerged, Sense of Place and Gathering Space. Each theme is supported by subthemes. The two themes and subthemes are presented in Table 3.

Table 3:
Emergent Themes and Subthemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Place</td>
<td>Belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purposeful Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cougar Nation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gathering Space</td>
<td>Fostering Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Building</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following a secondary analysis of the data, I found natural intersections between the themes, subthemes, and the combined framework previously presented the review of literature. The intersection between the combined framework, themes, and subthemes is shown in Table 4.
Table 4:

*Intersection of the Study's Themes, Definitions and Model.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Sense of Place</strong></th>
<th><strong>Gathering Space</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Campus Ecology</strong></td>
<td>Those who inhabit campus environments</td>
<td>Transactional relationships occurring in campus environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organic Community</strong></td>
<td>Patterns of belonging</td>
<td>Allow people to connect naturally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hierarchal Model of</strong></td>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>Involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental Purposed</strong></td>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>and Design</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this chapter, I provide examples from the interviews and written observations that give meaning to the themes of Sense of Place and Gathering Space. In doing so, I provide findings to answer the research questions. The research questions which guided this study were as follows:

1. How and to what extent do the notions of community appear in the planning process of a student union?

2. How are notions of community reflected in the use of the student union?

The details of the findings are presented within the overall themes. The findings for the first research question are provided in the Sense of Place theme because it is a reflection on the planning group’s intentionality of design and hope for the new space in the student union. The findings for the second research question are provided in the Gathering Space theme as a reflection on the outcome of the renovation and expansion project in this case study.

**Sense of Place**

The first of the two themes from this study was Sense of Place. A number of significant common threads emerged as subthemes including belonging, purposeful/functional space, and
community, which I refer to as Cougar Nation. These commonalities provide the context for the findings for the first research question. The findings are presented in the following order: 1) the impact of the design guidelines, 2) a presentation of the subthemes supporting Sense of Place, and then 3) a summary of the findings for the theme.

**Impact of Design Guidelines**

The design guidelines (Appendix D) were developed by the participants and members of the design and planning committees following a series of conversations about what they envisioned for the new student union. The guidelines reflect a broad definition of physical space and function that did not hamper idea generation and conceptual designs, yet provided parameters to meet expectations of the campus stakeholders on the finished product. In the structured interviews, participants were asked to reflect on the design guidelines, how they were developed, and if and how they were used throughout the design process. The participants’ responses provide a rich demonstration that the development and use of the guidelines drove the planning process. In his reflection, Reginald summed up the role of the guidelines:

…[A]ny discussion or decision that was made was with these six guidelines in mind. We involved students to help us establish a clearer perspective of these guidelines. We also had many building partners at the table, whether they were vendors in the building or maybe they were using the satellite. We asked for their perspective. The six guidelines served as the core values for the entire project. So every decision from my vantage point was made to pretty much follow these six guidelines.

Not all of the participants were involved from the initial concept of the renovation and expansion or from the moment the design phase began. An individual who participated in
various capacities over her time associated with the project, Lynne, remembered that in the planning process the guidelines “emerged as the top things that came out of a lot of discussions from a lot of different perspectives, whether it’s the survey, the focus groups, [or] the program development.” The guidelines served as the committee members’ litmus test when discussing what was needed in a renovated and expanded student union. In making decisions on new space or expanded spaces, Bosley stated, “We would always look at these six and say ‘do these [new or expanded functional spaces] really meet what we have tried to do all along?’” A student member who served in a couple of different roles, JJ, reflected on the guidelines and shared that he “wouldn’t necessarily say that we brought them out every time we had a new conversation about a space or anything. I think they were more of a guiding compass for us, just to keep us on track to what we were doing.”

Michael J shared that the guidelines “served [as] kind of a guiding force throughout the whole project and throughout the entire design portion.” He stated that he “believe[s] our team did a really good job making sure that we went back and referenced those because, again, this is a promise that we made to the student body and thing that we would deliver.” Craig, a former student employee, described the planning experience in the following way:

We went to go see what other student centers had done, what newly renovated student centers looked like, what sort of things those students were trying to get involved with, and [what they] were trying to have put in their facilities. And then we said we have the really bland building that students don’t really like, we are committed to making something better out of it; let’s try and do something that imparts those values.
A number of the participants commented on the commitment to follow best practices in the new facility along with honoring the students’ voices in exploring various design ideas. For example, Ed, an administrator at the university, shared that “one of the driving forces … was the goal of meeting national standards” in regard to the final product during the planning phase. Lynne shared: “We really intentionally focused on what we need to do to make that experience more geared to what the current needs are” and that “there were intentional conversations about how do you bring those facilities together.” In regard to honoring the students’ voices, Mike described a sense of obligation in the process: “One thing I think we did a really good job of was getting a lot of voices to the table throughout the whole design process.”

All participants articulated a certain level of obligation to adhere to the guidelines throughout the process with some providing very specific actions and use. One comment, however, provided another perspective on the outcome. JR stated,

> The community building process was part of the process itself for even talking about the transformation project. Making sure that we were building community around it [the project] to support it was part of it [the process]. And so that carries on forward. As far as how we talked about it and framed it, I think there was a kind of a good understanding.

The planning committee, with its commitment to honoring the guidelines, demonstrated ownership in the process from beginning to end. In doing so, the planning committee built its own community where all members were encouraged to be engaged for a common goal.

Creating a space that uniquely connected the current and future students to the university was a desired outcome of the planning committee. The University already benefits from a student population evenly represented by gender and ethnically diverse with no majority
population being represented (University of Houston, n.d.b). Thus in creating new and enhanced space in the student union, the planning committee focused on space that would be welcoming to all members of the campus community. In addition, it should be noted that the planning committee put additional emphasis on a welcoming space for the student community. The design guidelines kept the members focused on meeting the needs of current students and also future members of the campus community. The *Sense of Place* theme is supported by three subthemes that I present in the following section.

**Belonging**

The first subtheme is belonging. Bosley shared two insights that are identifiable as belonging, “We really want to make sure that students know that this is their building, their home away from home … something that they feel really comfortable in and brag about to their friends at other campuses.” And he added, “The students get very very excited about having a home, and commuter students think of it as their home away from home.” Charlie offered, “And it was really just a matter of let[ting] the students allow themselves to feel comfortable in the space, and when it is time to check-out they can leave their stuff and go. But it should really feel like a place of refuge, of solace.” Michael J added,

We are a university that supports various different groups of people whatever the group that may be. So I think in discussing spaces at the time, during the development process, we wanted to make sure that those groups still felt like they were still welcome and had space to develop themselves with their communities.

Michael J. alluded to the diversity of the student population and being cognizant of different levels of support and varying perceptions of safety and security.
A part of belonging is that students feel safe and included in the place in which they hang out, engage, and meet others (Strange & Banning, 2001). JR stated that “When we talked about [safety] with students, we didn’t really emphasize it so to speak in our platforms ... because it was kind of a known or an expectation that we would always consider that as our number one priority.” Mike added, “So safety didn’t really come up a lot; we are a largely interior space and so whenever we [were] talking about places for people, the idea of having a safe place or safety and all that, I don't recall it ever being something that was actively discussed. There was a certain understanding that we would have safety and security in the building.” Shasta commented:

Safety we talked about not in great length, but it was talked about … we wanted a space for students to come and feel safe in the general sense. Specifically, we wanted the opportunity for student leaders that were working late to have the opportunity to work in a secured manner.

William spoke about the physical space being open, accessible, and safe by “wanting to have a facility that was open as long as possible and accessible to students; knowing that they work and want to access spaces at different hours, the security system was important.” Lynne was direct in her response that it was important that they made "sure that people felt there was a safe presence."

In addition to wanting to create a space where all students regardless of race, ethnicity, and gender would feel comfortable to gather, a number of participants also mentioned the need to represent populations of students (e.g., veterans, international, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students) in the new and expanded student union. A number of participants spoke during their interviews about not only who would be considered users of the union, but which
groups or populations of students should have office space or departments that might cater to said populations housed in the student center. In various interviews, participants described the importance of finding spaces for existing university departments (e.g., veteran services, the women’s resource center, and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) resource center) that specifically focused on underserved populations. For example, JJ stated, “The Veterans Office, LGBT Resources, and [that] kind of stuff at the UC, in my opinion, just wasn’t visible before and people did not really know it existed.” Mike added,

I think we were thinking of it more in terms of traditional versus nontraditional, commuter vs. residential, full time versus part time, etc. But we were looking for it to be a space that all students felt welcome, so the word inclusion in itself may not have been used as much because we were really looking for it to be an inclusive space for everyone there.

Shasta spoke from a user’s perspective and on the importance of being inclusive in the process:

Inclusion - one of the things that we definitely wanted to do was to make sure that the campus services that were in the other areas of campus that we felt like were student centered/student focused had an opportunity to have space in this new building. In terms of being inclusive in the process, it was important … we wanted to make sure we had as many stakeholders as possible included in our actual planning committee.

Other reflections on conversations about inclusion included Nico and Lynne, who both spoke about it in relation to involvement. “Inclusion, um, think again the Student Organization Center because we are able to structure a really diverse group in there” (Nico). “Inclusion and involvement - I would say that those were things that no matter what a person[‘s] involvement
was in the project, I think those were core concepts … to make sure that the building was going to be inclusive to meet a lot of needs” (Lynne).

The Student Organization Center was designed to create more opportunities for registered student organizations to increase their presence in the student union. Along with having more desk/cubicle space for the student organizations, the new policies guiding the active use of the space also didn’t permit like organizations to cluster together. As described by the participants in the interview process, they wanted a space that would reflect the diversity of the campus community.

Even though the new Student Organization Center was much larger than the previous one, there was not enough space to provide a cubicle to all student organizations that desired one. Likewise, there was not enough dedicated space in the new student union for all of the student centered offices providing programs and services to diverse student demographics represented at the university. Craig made a thoughtful comment in regard to individuals who may not have been assigned space in the student union: “We don’t have an office space, but we can still be in the building, we can meet other students, we can play music, we can gather, whatever we want to do here, and it still our space.” Likewise, JR spoke about the importance of the physical space having an emotional connection to the university or more personal connection to the campus community when he mentioned intimacy with the space, “…You know when we say it's the home, and a place where we all go. We wanted to still have that intimate touch because that is something the old [facility] still offered.”

Finally, Shasta spoke about the excitement of wanting to create a space that uniquely connected the students to their university home. He wanted a place where students were a part of the space: “…we wanted it to feel like a home where people walked in and said wow, this is an
amazing home and I would like to be a part of this.” Shasta’s statement was echoed during the observation period when individual students and groups moved through and around the Monumental Stairway sometimes passing by others to find a spot to sit down. The students appeared comfortable being in the space and did not give indication of shyness about navigating around people to find a spot to call their own in the middle of the Monumental Stairway.

In addition to the students belonging as defined by feeling safe and included in the space, it was important that the space be functional and, for the most part, have a known purpose. In the next section I present the subtheme *purposeful*.

**Purposeful/Functional Space**

The desire to create *Sense of Place* through *belonging* was followed by the thoughtfulness described by the interviewed participants to design a physical space that would be *purposeful*. Nico shared the following,

> So I think that was really important for us to make sure that not only was the space convenient for our students but there was a reason we put, you know, an outlet there or a lounge chair there. So I definitely think that fosters that sense of place by enhancing the formal/informal sense of space [which] was definitely a big drive in our conversation.

William pointed out the importance of having a variety spaces with identifiable purposes and functions:

> There could be some private mediation space or private small room study space, and then to create an opportunity for students just to come and hang out and feel like this was their place. Because that was one of the major things it [the former space] was lacking.
JJ echoed William’s point on the variety of purposeful spaces and added a need for flexible space:

…we wanted to have a variety of different spaces so space where you can sit, space where you can stand, space where you can study, space where you can eat, space where you can talk, space where you can just hang out.

Craig also commented on the need for the spaces to be flexible:

…make it feel like this is the place where they could sit, and chill, and it could be there. If they want to meet people they can; if they want to zone into whatever they were doing, they could do that too. So we wanted it to be something that could be whatever you want it to be, all while still having that awe factor.

Reginald provided an insightful comment about what happens in purposeful space:

I think there is development, I think there is individual learning, I think whether we know it or not, there are relationships being built, there is that piece that we didn’t discuss literally but I think there is an inclusionary place.

Purposeful spaces or designated space for a specific function attracts students for different reasons. Bringing the students together with a common purpose also provides opportunities for informal and formal connections and relationships to form. In a broader view of the student union in general, JR was very direct when he stated the need for “a purposeful space where the entire university community can come together.”

**Cougar Nation**

The third subtheme for *Sense of Place* is *Cougar Nation* as defined through the connections or relationships that are made by the individuals in the shared space. In this section, I demonstrate that there was no clear definition of community developed by the planning
committee but that the descriptions of what they wanted the space to feel like are in fact in congruence with Myers’ definition of organic community. For example, Bosley shared his perception:

I don’t recall a time when we actually defined... community. We talked a lot in our marketing about the Cougar Nation. We talked about the mission because so many of our students were very aware of [what] the Student Center’s mission was all about. And it talks about the home for students, faculty, staff, alumni, and guests, so I think from that perspective we all had the general understanding that community would really be bringing people together around programs and events.

Charlie gave a similar example about how the committee reflected on community in respect to the project: “...the first stage in the idea of community for me, or at least what the students would call it...we were all, we are all Coogs, we all want that first class, that education, and I am trying to think of another way to put it. But it was that Cougar Family, that Cougar House.” Ella’s reflection on the committee’s definition pushes the concept of an “unstated” understanding: “I don’t recall that there was ever a definition of community. I think it was more of an understanding. The students wanted more gathering spaces, more community spaces. It is how those spaces would be used, which would define community.”

Ed added, “I think the other way was a sense of shared experiences. That the spaces and the services can create a sense of shared experiences because they can be visualized, and you have to interact with each other and that builds a sense of belonging and togetherness.” JJ stated, I think we defined community a lot as school pride. So it wasn’t just how people are going to interact but also bring in Cougar red things. Like the little pieces on the outside where it is red, the lights on the theatre part, more of a sense of
everybody here is part of a community. We are all UH Cougars, we are all one big happy Cougar family, we are all the same--that was the main priority.

Other reflections on conversations about community included these from Michael J. and Mike:

“Something that kind of represented the Cougar spirit, the Cougar pride that was going to be able to bring the whole student body together” (Michael J.). “So we didn’t operate from a single sense of community; if anything the other phrase we used a lot was really placing the building as a living room of campus especially for commuters” (Mike).

Shasta commented that ”we spoke in kind of broad terms of spaces that would attract students, attract the university community; at the time there was a strong desire to have more of a community-feeling space.” And he continued by saying, “It was to make this place feel like a campus living room where folks would be welcome and freshman would have a wow factor.”

Mike described the physical place as “The sorta of place where you can go and hang out and just …. See and be seen” and added that it should “foster a sense of place by enhanced formal and informal spaces.”

Additional comments from William and Reginald rounded out the overall thoughts on community in relation to Sense of Place. “We wanted the opportunity for student[s] to be happy with it; we viewed it as their facility and we wanted to enhance their opportunity to interact and be successful” (William). “We wanted to have some areas where students could not be seen if they want an area to study or nap but still be a part of the space and have all the freedoms that come with being a part of a community” (Reginald).

The committee implied community as being something of which everyone was a part as members of the greater university community and frequently used terms such as Cougar Nation, Cougar Family, or simply Cougars or “Coogs.” They talked about creating a space that felt like
“home” or one’s “living room.” In essence, they described a physical space where everyone would feel welcomed and have a sense of belonging. In addition, everyone would be connected to the campus through the Cougar Nation.

**Summary of Findings for Sense of Place**

The findings and analysis from the semi-structured interviews provided a basis for the theme *Sense of Place*. The impact of the design guidelines developed by the committee provided not only a starting point by which to engage the committee and campus constituencies on what the new student union should look and feel like, the provided a touchstone for the committee to hold themselves accountable. The planning committee demonstrated a commitment throughout the planning process to adhere to the design guidelines also permitted the planning committee to lay the foundation for the concept of an organic community to flourish. Regardless of their length of service, the participants and other committee members, embedded notions of community.

The theme, itself, is the framework for the findings for research question one, “How and to what extent do the notions of community appear in the planning process in a student union?” The planning committee members developed a sense of loyalty to the project and demonstrated pride in the outcome of their work. They, too, felt as if they were part of something larger then themselves and were contributing to enhancing the Cougar Nation.

In describing a *Sense of Place*, the members of the committee stated that they wanted the new student union to be the place on campus where students would feel safe and at home. In addition, the planning committee acknowledged that the student union must have purposeful space where students could explore activities, programs, and services. They wanted a space where students would feel comfortable and welcomed. Although the planning committee did not
develop a common definition of community, they envisioned a place that fosters belonging to something larger than themselves such as the Cougar Nation. The planning committee was committed to ensuring students would find the student union to be a “home away from home” and a place where individuals would have a sense of belonging regardless of who they are because they are part of the Cougar Nation. Reginald reinforced that “whatever decision we made [in the planning process] involved [a discussion on] community impact.”

**Gathering Space**

The second theme to emerge was *Gathering Space*. The outcomes of the observations of both the Monumental Stairway and the Student Organization Center not only confirmed the planning committee’s perceptions about uses of the spaces, but also provided greater detail on the types and frequency of activities along with insight about which students used the physical spaces. In respect to the Monumental Stairway and the Student Organization Center, all of the participants, regardless of whether they were former students or administrators/staff, stated that the new spaces met their expectations in creating spaces where students would gather and connect.

The observations provided an opportunity for me, as someone who was not on the planning committee, to observe both the Monumental Stairway and the Student Organization Center. A mix of individuals, small groups of two to three people, and larger groups of four or more were observed on the Monumental Stairway. Although the individuals and small groups were distributed throughout the Monumental Stairway, the larger groups were typically on the first landing at the top of the stairs which begin on ground floor of the Student Center. Similarly, those using the Student Organization space were a mix of individuals, small groups of two to three people, and larger groups of four or more. Groups were more common than individuals,
which makes sense because space was designed for student organizations. The groups also were
found both in and around carrels and in the more open spaces with tables and chairs along the
parameter of the space.

In respect to demographics, both men and women were using the spaces fairly equally, and the race and ethnicity of individuals were pretty well divided between White, African American, Asian, Asian-Indian, Hispanic, and possibly a few international students. Only once during all observation periods did we document a female student with a head scarf on the Monumental Stairway. Although individuals with head scarves walked through the space, they did not stay. In addition, except for a few outliers, almost everyone using the Monumental Stairway and the Student Organization Center appeared to be in the early twenties and traditionally-aged (i.e., 19-24) college students. The three outliers included a couple that appeared to be in their late 20s or early 30s, a slightly older student reading a book to a young child, and a group of three individuals crossing two generations from a small child to a woman in her late 20s to a gentleman who appeared to be in his late 50s or early 60s. Additional observations of individuals using the Student Organization Center did not reflect 100% of the University’s student demographics based on the observers’ perceptions (i.e., first generation, apparent visual or mobility challenges/limitations, academic diversity and so on), but the rich diversity of the campus student community was generally represented (e.g., gender, race, and ethnicity).

As the observation times progressed each day, the number of individuals on and around the Monumental Stairway increased. This increase became noticeable during the lunch time hours as the seating capacity of the food court appeared to meet its maximum. Additional observations that support Craig and JR’s comments included how individuals and groups
appeared to be at ease when in the spaces, and students demonstrated a high degree of comfort and, to some degree, vulnerability by lying down on the landings between the stairs whether in a group or alone. Furthermore, students appeared to feel as if they belonged and, even during more crowded times, students would navigate through the individuals to find a place to sit down. Many of the activities occurred with high frequency (e.g., charging phones and laptops, eating, drinking, and so forth) causing one observer, Ann, to state, "It seems like a place to 'recharge' with most of students staying for a good amount of time; they appear to get settled in for a while." I noted that “the space feels very organic; there is a great deal of ebb and flow with the groups."

In respect to the Monumental Stairway, individual students and groups gave the impression that they had found a place to be and hang out whether they were alone, with another individual, or part of a larger group. In addition, students were observed spreading their materials and belongings around them while they worked and engaged with others. Although the cubicle spaces in the Student Organization Center were not equally used during the various observation times over the two days, both observers agreed that it appeared that students felt a sense of ownership of the physical space, based on behavior and activity. This perception was demonstrated by the decorations used to identify the clubs’ names and their activities, the ability to move the tables and chairs into different configurations, multiple sources of audible music, and a lot of laughter from groups of students as well as their comfort with pulling additional chairs from unused cubicles into their space for more club members. High levels of comfort were displayed in the public through the high level of personal contact; on two occasions in the larger groups of students, there was a great deal a familiarity among the individuals with two separate examples of young women sitting in the laps of male companions even though there
were chairs available. Another example of ownership and, to some degree, the feeling of safety was a student sleeping on the ground with a pillow and his jacket pulled up over his head between two groups of students, but neither group seemed to be concerned.

The data analysis from the semi-structured interviews coupled with the observations of the Monumental Stairway and Student Organization Center provided the framework for the Gathering Space theme and generated the following subthemes: fostering activity, connections, and community building. These specific subthemes are more action-orientated than the previous subthemes from Sense of Place and frame the second theme, Gathering Place. The subthemes are presented below followed by the summary of the theme’s findings.

**Fostering Activity**

A common narrative developed from the semi-structured interviews that reflected a key objective of the overall project. The participants commented on the desired outcome for the new student union to create an environment that would foster activities for student engagement and/or collaboration between organizations. The following excerpts from the interviews illustrate that the student union was designed to nurture involvement. Craig expressed that “we were really hoping it would foster students to get out there and interact with people they wouldn’t normally interact with or make it easier to do so.” Ed added “that the spaces in the services [e.g., departments] can create a sense of shared experiences because they can be visualized, and you have to interact with each other and that builds a sense of belonging and togetherness.” Mike, when describing the new spaces, stated they wanted an environment that would support and encourage natural connections. Mike shared that they wanted “the ability for students to come together and we couched it in more that type of activities that they would be doing, hanging out and that kinda stuff.” JJ openly said that “…we wanted people to be
involved. We wanted to give the student organizations a space where they could be more visible to get students involved. And you talk about student involvement and student participation, activities and thing beyond academics.”

From another perspective, Charlie described specifically the intent of the Student Organization Center: “It was a very much an open collaborative environment.” Craig offered a similar perspective on the Student Organization Center in stating that they wanted to:

….make it feel like this is the place where they could sit, and chill, and it could be theirs; if they want to meet people they can, if they want to zone into whatever they were doing they could do that too. So we wanted it to be something that could be whatever you want it to be, all while having that awe factor.”

Nico emphasized that “we paid a lot of attention to definitely fostering involvement on campus. Like really make that space open for students to see, oh you can get involved.” On a similar note, Michael shared that the committee truly desired “…to have a space where people feel more compelled to interact with one another and therefore building up their community or different communities kind of coming together at certain times of the day or certain time of the school year depending on the time in the school year.”

Lynne emphasized the importance of having a variety of spaces that would foster activities in the new space: “It was a different type of gathering spaces, but it was a complement to the academic mission and it offered an alternative to what was happening at the library.”

Michael, a former student leader and now active alumnus, recalled the following moment when he was back on campus shortly after the opening of the newly renovated space:

We were in the Monumental Staircase area [and it] was just packed with all types of students. Students on their laptops, students listening to music, students asleep,
[and] students eating. We kind of looked at each other and said this is exactly what we wanted, this was our vision.

In each statement, the participants enthusiastically expressed an understanding that the individuals using the Monumental Stairway were indeed using the physical space as envisioned. Nico, a former student leader, provided a thoughtful summary:

People are not only sitting there, playing on their computers--that is kinda what we discussed about putting tables at each step of the big staircase. But then we decided no, just make it informal, so tying it back to the guidelines. I think that is one of the most popular informal spaces. And so for me as the planning perspective, I think that [it] surpassed my expectations; people really love it.”

The observations provided a strong congruence with what the participants described in their interviews and what I noted. The observations of the Monumental Stairway showcased students engaged in a variety of activities regardless of the number of people in the space. The activities ranged from reading and listening, watching and texting, use of notebook with use of laptop, talking and using phone and or laptop both individually and, to some extent, in groups of two or more. Other activities included eating or snacking throughout the day with some individuals bringing containers while most people appeared to get something at Starbucks or the food court. In addition, individuals were using their smart/cell phones; some appeared to be watching something while others appeared to be texting versus talking; some were charging their electronic devices (e.g., phone, iPads and laptops); and some were sitting without doing any noticeable activity, which was reflected in field notes as possibly “resting” or “relaxing.”

With respect to the Student Organization Center, the observations reflected some similar activities regardless of the number of people in the space. The activities were a mix of gathering
activities, both social and group activities (e.g., talking, card playing, academic study groups, and club specific projects), and individuals working at cubicle spaces that probably included club-orientated or personal activities (e.g., school work and socializing). Some individuals and small groups seemed to be studying alone or in a study group. Likewise, there was a greater level of activity and engagement if there were more than one person at a table or within a cubicle. The observed engagement in the Student Organization Center appeared to be more social than either academic or club-focused. Similar to the Monumental Stairway, students were multi-tasking (e.g., talking to others and texting or looking at their respective phones, or watching something on a laptop and sharing it with others).

Reflected in the observations were individuals, small groups, and larger groups (less frequent), but all types of traditional age students appeared to feel comfortable and at home in the space. In addition, throughout the four observation periods on each day for two days, both observers made note that some people chose to come back to the space throughout the day and some camped out for longer periods of time; it became their spot/place. Individuals appeared to navigate easily through the space. Both the Monumental Stairway and the Student Organization Center were demonstrated as spaces where individuals could be and typically were intentionally engaged in activities. In addition, both spaces also served as locations where individuals could and did connect with one another.

**Connections**

Connections were described by the planning committee members as the act of individuals simply being able to make associations with one another within a space like the Monumental Stairway or the Student Organization Center. In addition, the connection was also described in relation to the students connecting with the space where they feel welcomed to hang
out alone or to connect with others. Charlie described a conversation with the planning committee: “I know that in the planning of the UC that we were intentional to make space for students to just randomly bump into each other, sit down, and really connect in that way.” She added in respect to the Student Organization Center,

And that was really cool to be a part of having organizations just intermingle with one another and share ideas. Because you know that is the best way to work with one another, and looking back on it now. And I know when I came back a few weeks ago, seeing that space fully used was pretty phenomenal.

Charlie also mentioned the importance of creating more natural and organic ways to navigate through the facility, saying, “…natural pathways for students to walk … was one of those questions [we asked ourselves]. How do we allow this easy flow of student to kinda come in, but park their bike and at the same time walk up the stairs and catch their next meeting [in the student center].”

The concept of seeing and being seen was also used by planning committee members in describing the intention of “opening up” the Student Center. Bosley noted that “the design of all the new glass and natural light and people being able to see in and see out really does create an enhanced sense of I want to be here.” Nico captured this sentiment when she shared, “We want people to be able to see each other and foster that idea that you can talk to each other; not only are you just neighbors but you can talk to each other.”

General observations from the Monumental Stairway indicated that individuals appeared to settle in on the big stairs or platforms where they could spread out their work and their personal items. The individuals, mostly students, seemed comfortable using the space for long periods of time and were frequently lounging, lying down, resting, studying, talking, and/or
forming groups. There seemed to be a strong sense of place and belonging. A few incidences showcased individuals’ level of comfort in the space including their removing shoes after sitting down, playing a ukulele within a larger group for long periods of time, moving playfully up and down the big steps while moving from one side to the other during the evening observation when the space was less crowded.

JR reflected on the diversity of the campus community. He mentioned that during the planning the importance of fostering connections for the many facets of the community was discussed, saying “…how those diverse communities come together and interact together and build community and you know all that was important.” Lynne echoed a similar recollection of wanting to create spaces for greater interactions: “So that they were interacting at a great level and perhaps making connections that they may have not had a greatest potential to do, given that we had limited space.”

The second set of questions in the semi-structured interviews was about the use of the Student Organization Center. Although the Student Organization Center is not located in a major pathway like the Monumental Stairway, each of the participants made favorable perceptions of the actual space and how it was being currently used. Lynne, a long time staff member, described the following:

I would say that the usage in the student organization area [is] a lot of gathering. People are moving the furniture around. They feel comfortable shifting things in the space; I think people are taking ownership of the space. A lot of people have left their stuff there and even though they know it is not secured space, everyone is leaving their stuff out.”

Michael J, a former student leader, shared a similar observation:
One of the things we really wanted to increase was collaboration among the student organizations, and the setup itself with the way the student organization carrel spaces (or whatever we call those things) also is aiding in the collaboration among the different student organizations.

Michael, Mike and Shasta all talked about connections as a way to nurture community building in the new student center. Each remarked about creating space where the connections could be made to further building community within the campus community. Michael remarked that “…whether it was in terms of community building or the space, we used it in the framework of what are the types of things that we do currently that bring the student body together.” Mike continued the stream of thought when he stated that “…the idea of having these collaborative areas for students to get involved, and then again we kinda already talked about community, but yeh it was more the connections side of things.” One of the strongest comments linking the physical space with connections of individuals within the space came from Shasta: “I think the greatest thing is having space for them to collaborate together because, you know, in a time where you have limited resources, and even in a time when you don’t have limited resources, it is good to work together on common goals. You can accomplish so much.”

In my reflection on the observations of the Student Organization Center, it seemed that most of the individuals and groups of students remained in their spaces throughout the observation period. I noted that on a couple of occasions, there were the same students in the exact same spaces (e.g., cubicles or tables/chairs around the parameter) from the earlier observation time on both dates. There is no way to know whether they had been there the entire time or if they had returned between classes or other activities outside of the space. Either way, there was a sporadic flow of new individuals walking into the space during the observation time.
or many individuals moved around this space. The flexible tables and chairs tended to stay fairly close to the same spots throughout the day, and the space was never full or felt like it was at capacity, but it was active. It was observed that individuals were walking through the space looking for someone and also walking in and out after collecting something from a cubicle or meeting someone. It was certainly a place for students to connect with one another.

**Community Building**

The third subtheme for *Gathering Space* is community building and it is defined by the relationships developed through the connections made in the student union along with individuals’ involvement and membership in the larger community or Cougar Nation. In reflecting on all of the new and enhanced spaces (i.e., increased number of lounges, Monumental Stairway, study rooms, and open spaces) in the student union along with the prominence and placement of support programs and services (e.g., Veteran Services, LGBTQ Resource Center, Student Government Association, etc.), Lynne offered, “I think all of those things contribute to building community because then this building becomes a building of choice, which I think increases again the community connections and having people think that this is really a place for everybody.” Charlie shared that “sometimes simply being present in a space that you connect with others and contribute to the building of community based on the purpose or function of that space.” Charlie stated, “You are sitting down, relaxing, having a cup of coffee, reading a book, and that builds a sense of community, I have always felt.”

Participants of the committees made a number of comments in reference to aesthetics in the overall design process of the facility. JJ mentioned that “the building needed to look like it was on our campus…I think it helped with the community building.” In addition to the aesthetics and lounge spaces, Bosley shared the importance of adjacency between programs, services, and
leisure spaces. When talking about the Monumental Stairway, he described the following: “It is a place where people hang out, they study, they play games, they do cards, they dance, they charge their phones, and again just lots of places to hang out and meet each other and create those great, human connections.” Lynne echoed a similar reaction: “I think because those areas were more intentionally placed, I think the way that traffic flows that creates an opportunity for people to congregate and hopefully spend more time in the building.” JJ, a former student but frequent visitor to campus, echoed something similar after recalling seeing a social media post:

There was a picture and the thing [Monumental Stairway] was full and I was like we did it. Like that is exactly what we were shooting for: we wanted a centerpiece, we wanted a gathering space, and kind of a defined area where it is like if someone said meet me at the UC stairs like everyone knows where that is.

Ella commented overall about the Student Center after its opening in relation to community and community building that “you can pretty much walk into the building and you can pretty much see there are pockets where you can have community building.” In reflecting on the entire project, she added that “…two of the most important thing[s] to me is that it had a sense of community and it let people gather into a very centralized space and it was open.”

Through the observations, it was noted that the services on, above, or on either side of the Monumental Stairway (e.g., the food court on the main floor or the Starbucks, Leisure Center, lounge space, program and service offices on the lower level) did not appear to be the impetus for the use of or the observed behavior on the stairway. The users of the space were not gathering on the Monumental Stairway because of the Starbucks at the lower level, nor were they sitting there due to the food court on the first level. Although the first day of observations was identified as the busier day (e.g., scheduled activities in the Student Center), it was noted that the
very rainy and cold weather outside may have influenced the number of students in the overall facility. With regard to the types of activities individuals engaged in, there appeared to be no significant difference between the first and the second day of observations. The Monumental Stairway was an inviting, living space where community building appeared to take place.

Charlie, a former student leader, described the Student Organization Center by sharing, “There are so many areas for collaboration and community building” and that it is an “open collaborative environment.” An interesting observation by Reginald demonstrated a positive outcome of the new space: “Student organizations are beginning to discover each other and maybe starting to find ways to collaborate.”

The perceived use of the Student Organization Center by the participants in the semi-structured interviews demonstrates not only usage but a positive contribution to involvement and collaboration. Craig, a former student employee of the student union, shared the following observation on the usage: “Even on days where it’s not necessarily a lot of students there, it [student union] generally feels alive. There is something happening; you get that feeling like something big happened and you need to be a part of it because we are fixing to change the world.” A powerful summary of the importance of the Student Organization Center in providing this physical space for the students came from Shasta:

I always say campus life is really built on the student organizations you have there and their strength. So if we can find a way to support what they are doing, then we are just, we going to have a strong student body. And the space really helps a lot. I think it is one of the best spaces in the country for student organizations.

Circling back to intentionality but in respect to community building, Michael added, “…I think those were the types of conversations we were having and all that translated into, at least
now, into the type of community building, you know that potential for the community building that could happen in the various spaces that were in the building.” Bosley said, “I think an unintended consequence is we have a lot of people that just hang out in the student center that weren’t doing that before. And our numbers, from a business perspective, show that we have lots and lots more traffic.”

**Summary of Findings of Gathering Space**

The desire of the planning committee was to create a physical space that would optimize student life and student success, enhance campus community by providing a location for activities and services, and create an environment to foster synergy among students and student organizations. The emergence of *Gathering Space* as the second theme merges the aspect of physical space where activities occur with relationships being fostered. The intertwining between the physical space and a nurturing environment is evident in response for the second research question, “How are notions of community reflected in the use of the student union?”

The renovated and expanded student union provides an environment where engagement is cultivated and lends itself to involvement and community building. The *Gathering Space* theme is a manifestation of the notions of community that were represented in the completion of the renovation and expansion of the student union. The outcome of the intentional planning and adherence to the guidelines as the project advanced over time created a new student center which both nurtures a sense of place and is a transformed gathering space for the campus community.

**Conclusion**

The results of the data analysis identified the intersectionality of the definitions and model with the themes and subthemes (Figure 4.2). This analysis provided the additional context for the themes and the subsequent answers to the research questions which guided this study.
The themes illustrated the positive impact of the notions of community both in the planning process and as an outcome of the project. Bosley’s insight on the overall project and on the relationship of community and physical space echoes that outcome:

Those two spaces with other spaces have made us [the student union] a heartbeat of the campus. If students want to meet, they used to say ‘meet me at the library,’ or ‘meet me at the rec center’ and now I hear lots of students in and out of the building saying ‘let’s meet at the student center stairs’ or ‘let's meet at the Starbucks,’ so this makes me feel really happy that we did a good job.

The overall findings of the study provide insight into how the notions of community impacted the planning process and are reflected in the day-to-day use of the Student Union. In the next chapter, I provide a summary of the study, a discussion on the findings, recommendations for future research, and closing comments.
Chapter Five: Summary, Discussion, Recommendations, and Future Research

Environments that are conducive for community building provide space and opportunities for individuals to make connections with their peers and establish relationships (Kenny, Dumont & Kenny, 2005). Student unions provide space where students gather, have access to services, and connect with one another. “The college union is far more than a building; it is a life experience” (Knell & Latta, 2006, p. 161). The purpose of this study was to learn how notions of community may have been incorporated in the planning process of a newly renovated and expanded student union and better understand the relationship of community in two of the spaces created as an outcome of the project. In this final chapter, I present a summary of the study and a discussion of the findings as they relate to the literature. I also provide recommendations about how the findings can enhance the work of student affairs professionals along with ideas for future research.

Summary of Study

In this section, I review the background and rationale, research problem and questions, study framework, data collection and participants, and findings.

Background and Rationale

Traditionally the student union has been a place where all students - residential and commuter - can gather for leisure activities and have access to services on campus (Thelin, 2004). The student union is where student connections are made and where a campus community is fostered. Jacoby and Garland (2004) highlight the importance of union design in creating a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere. The student union should be an open space with pathways that invite students to move freely through the facility and with gathering spaces that foster opportunities for interactions within the facility (Alexander, 1979). “The interplay of the
architecture, people, and ideas make the college union a truly amazing entity” (Knell & Latta, 2006, p. 161). Although ACUI describes the student union as the living room of the campus where one feels at home and connected to others, there is a void in the evidence on the role of the college union in building community.

**Research Problem**

Two books offer anecdotal evidence that demonstrates heartwarming experiences of students benefiting from feeling connection to a student union (Butts, 1971; Butts et al, 2012). In addition, Manning and Kuh (2005) state that “built structures and memories are inextricably intertwined to form deep emotional ties to the institution” (p. 1). Yet, research is still limited on how physical space actually contributes to these experiences within a student union. Authors of a 30-year (1981-2011) review of higher education dissertations only identified 23 dissertations with a specific focus on the college union (DeSawal & Yakaboski, 2013). Although this is not an insignificant number, only six focused on the actual facility, and none explored the relationship between the physical space of the student union and community. The void in the literature provided an opportunity to explore the influence of physical space on nurturing interactions among students in the campus environment.

**Study Framework**

Based on developmental and campus ecology theories, there is a connection between the physical environment and a sense of belonging within the campus community (Banning & Strange, 2001). Through this study, I explored the relationship between the physical space of a student union and its impact on community building, guided by the following questions:

1. How and to what extent do the notions of community appear in the planning process of a student union?
2. How are notions of community reflected in the use of the student union?

This qualitative case study was framed by the theory of campus ecology (Banning, 2012), the definition of organic community (Myers, 2007), and supported by the Hierarchal Model of Environmental Purposes and Design (Strange & Banning, 2001) as outlined in Figure 2.3. The campus ecology theory explains the relationship between physical space, individuals, and activities within that space. The definition of organic community outlines how individuals may feel in the physical space and choose to engage within it. The three phases of the hierarchical model describe a progression by individuals as they move from feeling safe within an inclusive environment to being engaged in the space and ultimately developing connections with the community.

Data Collection and Study Participants

There were two sources of data collection: semi-structured interviews followed by observations of the Monumental Stairway and Student Organization Center. The interviews, for the most part, took place on campus, varied in length, and permitted participants to articulate their thoughts about the planning and design processes. The interviews led participants through four categories of questions with the first two categories focused on the guidelines and participants’ perceptions of community in the planning process. The remaining categories focused on participants’ perceptions of key words (e.g., safety, inclusion, engagement, and community) and descriptions of their understanding of how individuals use both the Monumental Stairway and Student Organization Center.

There were 15 participants in the semi-structured interviews who represented membership from either the planning committee or the project committee. They had varying lengths of involvement in the overall project, depending on their respective status at the time.
the 15 individuals, nine were undergraduate students during the project and six were staff members or administrators. At the date of the interviews, each of the student participants had graduated, but a majority of them were still residing locally. Of the six administrators and staff, all were currently employed at the institution at the time of the interviews and eager to have a chance to share their thoughts following completion of the overall project. The demographics of the individuals were relatively diverse (e.g., race/ethnicity, age, length of service to the project and at the University), but more heavily male (11) than female (4).

The second source of data was observations of how the space was being used and by whom. The observations were conducted at the Monumental Stairway and Student Organization Center over two different days with multiple observation periods, and a second observer assisted in the process.

**Data Analysis**

A review of interview transcriptions and observation field notes coupled with member checks provided me the ability to become familiar with the data and incorporate emerging concepts (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). The use of pre-coding helped me to identify keywords and phrases (Saldana, 2013). In addition, deductive coding led to the alignment of the data with the planning process, congruence with the definition of organic community, and application of the four terms or concepts from Strange and Banning’s (2001) model (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013).

**Findings**

The results of the data analysis affirmed that in adhering to their guidelines, the planning committee designed an environment where engagement is cultivated and lends itself to involvement and community building. The first major theme *Sense of Place* provided the
framework for the findings related to research question one, “How and to what extent do the notions of community appear in the planning process in a student union?” The emergence of *Gathering Space*, as the second theme, creates an intersection of physical space where activities occur and where relationships are fostered. This theme provided the framework for the findings related to the second research question, “How are notions of community reflected in the use of the student union?”

In describing a *Sense of Place*, participants imagined a place that fosters belonging. *Sense of Place* included matters of safety and inclusion, which are necessary in order for community members to have a sense of belonging. The participants envisioned a “home away from home” and a place where individuals would feel a sense of belonging regardless of who they are because they are part of the campus community. The *Gathering Space* theme included demonstrations of community in the use of the renovated and expanded student union. The student union provides a space on campus where individuals connect naturally and engagement is fostered. The overall findings of the study provide insight regarding how notions of community influenced the planning process and are reflected in the day-to-day use of the student union.

**Discussion**

Student unions have served significant roles throughout the history of higher education as social and civic clubs and as gathering locations as well as one-stop shops for services and support (Knell & Latta, 2006). One of the outcomes of this study was the influence of space on connections between individuals, which served as a catalyst for community building in the student union. The design of the student union is significant in nurturing organic community through accessible and inclusive spaces. In this study I demonstrate the relevance of the
interconnectedness of the space of the student union, the individuals who use it, and the activities in which they engage. In this section of the chapter, I connect the findings of each theme by noting similarities and contrasts to the literature.

**Theme One: Sense of Place**

I found that during the semi-structured interviews, participants articulated an understanding that they were part of something larger than themselves and had the opportunity to make a lasting impact on the campus. They expressed positive feelings about being engaged in the planning and design of something that was more than just a building. There was a commitment to create something exciting, which would meet the needs of students and the campus community of today and the future. In developing an understanding of the planning process and what the participants experienced, I was able to identify the three sub-themes of belonging, purposeful space, and community in the context of this first major theme. In addition, participants described the planning process as a series of intentional and inclusive conversations based on agreed upon design guidelines.

The prescribed planning stages outlined in the literature were “exploratory, programme identification, design specification, and use and management” (van der Voordt & van Wegan, 2005, pp. 8-9). In my review of the interview transcripts, I made note that none of the participants actually referred to a particular planning process or planning phases other than a self-imposed commitment to hear from as many constituents as possible before holding a vote to fund the project. Ironically, planning committee members were following the prescribed planning stages despite not being aware of it. In fact, members of the planning committee, under the guidance of the primary architect, created a set of design guidelines (Appendix D) that established general parameters during the exploratory phase. The guidelines encouraged
dreaming big but also kept the planning and design teams focused. The guidelines provided a road map of sorts during the design process. One participant echoed many of his fellow participants when he shared that the guidelines kept the conversations focused on the promises made to the student body.

Some participants described the extensive work completed by the staff and planning committee as affirming and rewarding. By engaging students with options on the size of the facility, total cost, and impact on the student fee, the committee was creating strategies for success. “The more the vision [or a project] encompasses multiple objectives and is understood and supported by multiple constituencies, the more momentum is created to make it real” (Kenney, Dumont, & Kenney, 2005, p. 257). This was demonstrated by the commitment of the student leaders on the planning committee to remain engaged in the project through their respective graduations and beyond.

Throughout the planning committee’s efforts to speak with so many constituents and incorporate their ideas within the context of the design guidelines, participants demonstrated a commitment to secure congruence between design and functionality along with input on aesthetics and atmosphere. These efforts affirm the role of phases two, three, and four in the prescribed planning process. In addition, Kenney, Dumont, and Kenney (2005) state that it is critical to have

strategies to deal with resource challenges … using existing facilities to the maximum, reusing the revitalizing existing building in preference to building new ones, accomplishing multiple objectives with each building project, finding creative funding opportunities, link capital projects with larger institutional goals and strategies. (p. 247)
The intentional priority of the planning process was to create spaces where students would be able to connect, relax, and engage with each other. The planning committee’s efforts were met with great appreciation and satisfaction by the students, evidenced by the students expressed overwhelming excitement about the new student union on social media after the opening of both phases. Students and members of the campus community openly embraced the new space. This affirmation also indicates that the planning and design process was successful, despite apparent lack of awareness of a formal process other than the creation of design guidelines.

The intentionality of the planning committee to create a physical space where student connections take place was critical. The environments and physical spaces of the university contribute to the virtual boundaries where students socialize, study, and work. Establishing locations where students feel a sense of belonging creates physical spaces that feel welcoming and provide meaningful opportunities for students to gather. Understanding how to foster organic community (Myers, 2007) is essential in supporting student connections and the inclusion, which are manifested through the patterns of belonging and engagement in organizations or activities.

An interesting reflection by one of the participants was that the planning and design process in and of itself was an act of community building. Over the course of their engagement in the project, there was an increased sense of ownership, a commitment to influence the design so that it would welcome all, and a desire to get it right. The impact on participants from the planning committee was not something I found referenced in the literature. Fostering the investment by those engaged in the process was apparently not discussed among the committee members, but it was a thoughtful and empowering experience for participants. This second level
of community building for the participants is noteworthy. The engagement among the members on the planning committee created an opportunity through a shared experience for the members to make connections and foster a sense of community.

As identified in this study, having a Sense of Place provides opportunities for students to cultivate belonging, identify with a purposeful place, and develop a connection to their community. Strayhorn (2012) identified a direct correlation between belonging and satisfaction that “leads to positive gains such as happiness, elation, achievement, and optimal function” (p. 6). In creating “sense of place” with “powerful connections [for the students] to something larger than [them]selves” (Manning & Kuh, 2005, p. 1), the student union becomes a significant gathering space for the students. This study affirms that university leaders and student affairs professionals need “to understand … the characteristics of the physical environment that foster community, and to recognize the role that many parts of the physical environment play in enhancing in the richness of community on campus” (Kenney, Dumont & Kenney, 2005, p. 56).

**Theme Two: Gathering Space**

The second theme from the study was Gathering Space. The importance of this theme demonstrates the important way that the student union fosters activity, supports spaces that are welcoming and inclusive for all students and members of the community. In addition, student unions foster continued community building through the activities and events hosted in the space. In regard to establishing and sustaining an environment where patterns of belonging would be supported, participants wholeheartedly wanted to create an atmosphere where all students knew they were part of the “Cougar Family.” One participant even went so far as to state that “we wanted to create this phenomenal area, we [wanted to] have this space in the middle…a place to take a break, feel connected, [and] that you belong.”
Although community was never truly defined by the participants in my interviews, Myers’ (2007) organic community provided the context of what some of the participants described. Participants made known that they wanted all students to feel welcome and there should also be a sense that the entire building belongs to everyone. Participants echoed the need for a student center that evoked pride among the students, a place where students would want to hang out and attend social and cultural events. A number of participants who were students during their time on the planning committee referred to the negative impact the student union had before it was renovated; they reflected on the “lack of an impression” the facility left on potential students and their family members during campus visits.

A student union facility can be a contributing factor for students when exploring universities and assessing their satisfaction with their college experience. Recent research on green student centers demonstrated that the “facets of green student centers that influence the environment holistically, as it directly relates to perception of and satisfaction with the institution” (Harrell, 2012, p. 6). Another “research approach present[ed] how both students and professional staff perceive the College Union, the programs that are part of the facility, and how it impacts the retention of students” (Tierno, 2013, p. iv). Tierno spoke to the importance students may place on updated and new facilities. This study did not demonstrate that the student union positively impacted student retention, but found “the College Union to be an integral part in enhancing the campus environment and providing the services and spaces that support student engagement on campus” (p. 75).

In contrast, my research looked for the relationship of the physical space of the student union and the individuals engaged in activities within it. The student union is more than just a facility; the student union is a gathering space where activities provide opportunities for students
to be involved and for connections to take place. The attraction to the student union may include the aesthetics, activities it hosts, visible support of sustainability, access to supportive services, and/or the connection to the space, in general.

In the definitions of both campus ecology (Banning, 2012) and organic community (Myers, 2007), there are two fundamental ideas of the 1) transactional relationship with the activities and the environment, and 2) a welcoming space where individuals can choose to engage. The student union facility is an important space for students since it traditionally provides access to campus and student support services, bookstore, food court, leisure spaces, meeting rooms, and common gathering spaces. As in the institution of my case study, there are also dedicated office spaces for veteran services, women and gender resource center, LGBTQ resource center, student government association, international student services, and student media (i.e., student-run newspaper, radio, and TV). The student center provides multiple spaces where students can meet, work on projects, and/or relax. There is also a significant space dedicated to student organizations. Each of these offices or resources contributes to a Sense of Place throughout the facility and also provides a significant Gathering Space for the campus community.

Strange and Banning’s (2001) Hierarchy of Environmental Purposes and Design model specifically considers the impact of the environment and physical spaces on the college student experience and the building of community. The student’s experience begins with a sense of security and belonging in the space followed by engagement in the activities held within this space and culminating with a sense of full membership in a community. Interview participants spoke of the importance of students and community members having a sense of security and feeling that they belonged in the student center. It was very important to the planning and design
committee members that the space be perceived as inclusive to all members of the campus community. One of the interviewed participants reflected most adamantly that it was very important to get a number of the services dedicated to vulnerable populations back into the student center but in more prominent locations. The placement of these services would send a clear message that all members of the campus community are welcomed. Observations of both the Monumental Stairway and Student Organization Center provided the opportunity to note the diversity of those using the two spaces through the course of a day, which was a positive reflection of the institution’s racial and ethnic diversity. The findings of this study indicate that development of physical space that provides opportunities for students to gather matters as presented in.

It is worth noting that several dissertations using campus ecology theory were completed in 2014 and explored physical space and community on a college campus. The first two were qualitative studies using photo elicitation, and the third was a quantitative study based on survey data. Harrington (2014) explored “what role the campus physical environment play[s] in students’ experience of community in college” (p. 5). The participants in this study took images across the campus in locations where they thought community was being demonstrated. Although there were some images of the student union included, the images were not limited to just this facility. Through semi-structured interviews, “participants in this study reported that the natural and built environments provided them with various spaces to make meaningful connections with their peers and become engaged members of the academically focused learning community” (p. 84). The second study asked transfer students to capture images of community throughout the student center to explore if “there is a possibility that it might have positive effects on the ability of this transfer population to interact with fellow students and engage in
activities or programs” (Reif, 2014, p. 6). The analysis determined that “students were able to identify characteristics of physical space that made community building easier; however, the researcher was not prepared to find out that without ideal conditions, students will still find a way to interact and share experiences” (p. 228). In the quantitative study, “the relationship between a sense of community on campus and the college union” was examined (Barrett, 2014, p. 160). The researcher “found that satisfaction with the college union was the best predictor of student satisfaction with college social activities and social support network compared to the other physical spaces and student satisfaction with safety and security” (p. 161). Although these findings link community with physical space to some extent, they do not address the actual relationship between the physical space, the individuals who use the space, and the activities within the physical space of the student union.

Although it is important to know where students see community and understand why and how they see it, my study explored the actual spaces in the student union and their relationship with the individuals and activities. The focus of my study permitted me to explore the relationship of physical space and the notions of community through a campus ecology lens in an environment where organic community existed.

Summary of the Discussion

Through a case study analysis of the renovation and expansion of a student union, I identified how notions of community were represented in the planning and design process and how they were demonstrated in the physical spaces of the student union. The research from this case study will provide evidence to fill the gap between anecdotal explanations about community building and its relationship with student union facilities at institutions of higher education in the
United States. It is significant to understand the important of the physical space that provides opportunities for students to gather.

Institutional leaders must take into consideration the role that physical space can have in supporting community. Student affairs professionals must engage in fostering organic community or the notions of community in and around the student union and similar student-centered spaces like the recreation center, residence halls, and campus libraries. Student affairs professionals can take the lead in collaborative efforts to enhance and sustain engaged social and learning activities in and around the student union to support community building. These efforts should include continuous investment in student organizations, student organization spaces, common gathering spaces, and leisure spaces. As shown by this study, the student affairs professional must lead the way in fostering a Sense of Place and supporting Gathering Space(s). Students benefit directly from all of these efforts with a greater connection to the campus community and a feeling that the institution believes in both their individual and collective success.

The next section of the chapter will focus on recommendations for student affairs professionals.

**Recommendations and Future Research**

A desired outcome of this study was to create a body of knowledge that connects the physical space of the student union with the students and their activities within the facility to provide student affairs professionals with enhanced insight in day-to-day operations, strategic planning, and renovation or repurposing existing facilities. The ability to connect student engagement and a sense of community with physical space creates opportunities to plan student-centered facilities that purposefully contribute to students’ sense of belonging. In addition, the
findings can empower student affairs professionals to take responsibility in the design of student-centered facilities to support and foster campus community.

Planning Process

The planning process for designing a new and/or renovating an older student union should follow a systematic approach as outlined by van der Voordt and van Wegan (2005). First and foremost, the planning committee must be an inclusive group of participants who bring different perspectives to the discussion to ensure a diversity of thought, ideas, and needs. Since the planning committee will shape the framework to guide the design of the new facility, the planning process should take into consideration the many constituents who make up the campus community. The planning committee in my case study was very careful to reach out to many different student groups, faculty leaders and their governance organization, and the staff council. The planning committee also met with former student leaders and active alumni.

I strongly recommend that campus leaders and architects leading similar projects take into consideration the individuals who they ask to serve on the planning committee. As summarized previously, the individuals must be an inclusive group who bring together a diversity of thought, ideas, and needs for the campus community. In addition, the campus leaders must take into consideration that a positive outcome of serving on the planning committee, itself, can create a significant stakeholders group for the project. As one participant stated the planning and design process in and of itself built community among the planning committee members. Their increased their sense of ownership and as such the participants became advocates strongly committed to the success of the project. For campus leaders and lead architects, these advocates are informed and empowered spokespersons to assist in building
excitement on the project and the positive impact in the successful completion of the new facility.

I also strongly recommend early adoption of a set of design guidelines which provides a framework for the actual design development of the renovation or new construction project. The guidelines should summarize the cumulative feedback from constituent meetings and also provide the planning committee members with talking points on the actual project. Once the guidelines are developed, it is imperative to share them with the constituents with whom the planning committee originally met. One participant from the case study indicated that the guidelines summed up the core values of the entire project, which was significant to all involved. The guidelines, while somewhat broad in nature, provided aspirations and expectations for the outcome of the project. The design guidelines should also serve as a touchstone in the process and provide a baseline to hold one another accountable when recommending identified spaces or programs and services to place in the facility. The design guidelines also outline the intentionality of the overall process.

Planning is not necessarily about a democratic or participatory process per se, but rather a deliberative conversation about values and the interpretation and aptness of goals and means (Forrester, 1999). A participant in my case study stated that the process must reflect the desired outcome of the project and provided the example that if the facility is to be inclusive of the diverse campus community, then the process needs to welcome a diversity of perspectives throughout. The commitment to such intentionality in the process supports a thoughtful and purposeful work environment for the committee members. Although in this case study there was a lack of knowledge of the prescribed planning stages, there was great success in the outcome of the project due to the intentionality of the process followed over the multiple years of the project.
I strongly recommend that lead architects inform and educate the members serving on the planning committee of the prescribed process and the specific phases. The planning committee should use the prescribed process and established design guidelines to remain focused on bringing the dreams and hopes of the constituents to fruition. I strongly recommend using the prescribed planning process as it will permit student affairs professionals to systematically engage constituents while defining purpose for new or renovated physical spaces, exploring possible uses, and building a sense of project ownership within the campus community. Student affairs professionals must begin to include a culture of environmental assessment for student-centered facilities like student unions to contribute to and fully complete the planning process.

**Post Occupancy Evaluations**

Over the last decade, student affairs professionals have been challenged to assess their programs, services, and activities effectively. Although student affairs professionals have endless anecdotal stories about how students are positively affected through their engagement, there now exist greater demands on learning outcomes and assessment directly associated with the events and services provided. This expectation should also exist with the student-centered facilities on the college campus such as the student union. As outlined in the literature review, the remaining phase of the prescribed process at the completion of the space is a post occupancy evaluation (POE). Friedman, Zimring and Zube, (1978) support the idea that effective evaluations can lead to an improved design process for an existing facility and for future facilities.

Environmental assessment is one of the most neglected forms of assessment (Upcraft & Schuh, 1996). Traditional data collected to demonstrate how a student union facility is occupied does not typically explore how the users feel or why they choose to come to the student union.
Strange and Banning (2001) state “that any educational institution’s environmental capacity to encourage and sustain learning is the degree to which it provides the conditional (in real and virtual form) for students’ inclusion, safety, involvement, and full membership in a community” (p. 200). Therefore, as shown by my study, student affairs professionals should implement a POE designed using a campus ecology lens, understanding that the relationship between student and campus is a transactional one “with an assumption that student and campus are mutually shaping forces” (Strange & Banning, 2001, p. 200). A comprehensive POE must look beyond annual deferred maintenance and basic usage data to inform decision making and resource allocation for a current facility. “Environments exert their influence on behavior through an array of natural and synthetic physical features, through the collection characteristics of inhabitants, the manner in which they are organized, and as mediated through their collective social constructions” (Strange & Banning, 2001, p. 200). The student affairs professional should use a comprehensive POE to understand why students and other members of the campus community choose to use the student union. The POE is a great example of using campus ecology in an assessment function which is a demonstration of a student affairs professional engaging as scholar-practitioners. I will next outline my recommendation for student affairs professionals to be effective scholar-practitioners and then present my ideas on future research.

**Scholar-Practitioners**

Student affairs professionals must stay current with professional competencies that challenge them to attain the role of scholar-practitioners and to be more effective in their careers. ACUI developed a set of core competencies (ACUI, 2015), which provide context for student affairs professionals who wish to excel in student activities and college unions. More than a list of skills to master, the ACUI core competencies provide a set of measurements in areas such as
communication, facilities management, fiscal management, human resource development, intercultural proficiency, and student learning. The challenge for student affairs professionals is to invest in their own scholarship as a complement to their roles as practitioners.

“Being a scholar-practitioner means having the ability to put theory into practice” (Haines, 2016, p. 18). Making the time to explore not only best practices through professional associations, student affairs professionals must be willing to explore the research, such as student engagement, environmental assessment, campus ecology, critical race theory, environmental psychology, and high impact learning to name a few. “When faced with a problem of practice, a scholar-practitioner seeks research that will help enlighten them about productive solutions” (Haines, 2016, p. 18).

In my study, the literature review alluded to the lack of effective POEs in student-centered facilities. I strongly recommend that student affairs professionals, as a scholar-practitioner, should implement effective environmental assessments to strengthen the narrative for the importance of student unions and demonstrate an alignment with the institution’s mission and values. In addition, campus leaders should expect such environmental assessments as part of annual evaluations of the student union and its programs and services. Likewise, campus leaders should expect a comprehensive POE when determining the future of aging student unions and in the justifications for renovating or replacing existing student unions. The possibilities for future research suggested in the next section provide additional ideas for furthering the conversations on the importance of physical space and its relationship with building community to support student success.
Future Research

I explored the planning and design process and observed how individuals use and connect with one another in physical spaces designed to foster organic community. The findings from this case study can inform future designers of student unions about the impact of physical space on community building. Future research could include the planning and design process in and of itself as an act of community building. As one participant reflected, the overall process included an increased sense of ownership by the members of the planning committee with a strong commitment to influence the design of the new student union so that it would be a welcoming space for all students. The impact on participants from the planning committee was not something I found referenced in the literature and would provide helpful insight to campus leaders managing new facilities projects. In addition, the findings support the regular use of the POE that integrates a campus ecology lens to determine the congruence between the use of the physical space and the original design and intent. Future research could also include a focus on gathering spaces in student unions with populations not identified in my study and possible comparative studies to test the outcomes of this study.

As identified earlier, this study was limited based on the demographics of students who were observed using the gathering spaces. Individuals from the following demographics were not seen in the two spaces: faculty and staff, older students, individuals with limited vision, and individuals with mobility issues/challenges. Another limitation to the study was that the observation methodology did not provide an opportunity to identify sexual orientation, gender identity, or any indication of faith other than maybe a few limited cultural identifiers (e.g., headscarf). It would be useful to learn whether students from more diverse backgrounds would have similar experiences as those observed in my case study. Although Patton (2010) presents the
role and scope of various cultural centers in *Cultural Centers in Higher Education: Perspective on Identity, Theory, and Practice*, there is limited research on the role of the student union in relationship to a more diverse student demographic. Identifying and learning more about the diversity of the students and how/when they are using the student union would potentially provide a more comprehensive understanding on how a diverse student body may be finding connections and engagement in the student union.

Additional research might include a survey on perceptions of the space (i.e., is it welcoming, accessible, engaging; does the student feel at ease in the space, and so on). The additional research could include a student focus group with open ended questions (e.g., “describe how you may or may not engage in the space,” “describe what prevents you from using the space,” “describe the types of activities you engaged in the last time you utilized the space,” and so forth). Developing a greater understanding of students’ perceptions of student-centered physical space can assist student affairs professionals in effectively identifying efficient uses of human, financial, and physical resources to best support students, their development, and their persistence at the institution. Manning and Kuh (2005) emphasize that “students are more likely to flourish in settings where they are known and valued as individuals contrasted with settings where they feel anonymous” (p. 3). The importance for “creating a special sense of place” (p. 2) is the basis of their study and congruent with one of the major themes from this study.

New research could present the relevance of the student union within the context of the institution’s mission. DeSawal and Yakaboski (2013) challenged new researchers to demonstrate “how the college unions support the academic mission of higher education and how its physical space creates learning for diverse student populations” (p. 31). Although a student
union may be perceived as more geared to social or cultural activities outside of the classroom, it does not preclude having spaces like study rooms with flexible work space where academic-related activities can take place. Manning and Kuh (2005) identified that when “space is dedicated for ‘socially catalytic’ interactions, areas where students and faculty can meet informally or where student can work together on projects” (p. 2), it can influence student success. The findings of this new research would be beneficial to student affairs professionals to create strong narratives about the importance of purposefully designed student-centered physical space as a way to support student success. Demonstrating a high congruence with the student union and the mission of the institution provides a compelling narrative for human, financial, and physical resources particularly when combined with data.

Finally, a comparative case study based on similar-sized student unions or campus communities would provide opportunities to demonstrate similar outcomes in relation to physical space and community. My case study only looked at one student union and two distinct gathering spaces. It would be beneficial to compare multiple student unions with similar gathering spaces in each such as lounges, study spaces, TV lounges, games room/leisure spaces, and student organization centers. There are also functional spaces like a theatre/auditorium, meeting rooms, and food courts where notions of community may manifest themselves. The results of the comparisons across like-sized schools or student union operations could prove helpful within the context of campus ecology and organic community.

**Conclusion**

In understanding the *Role of the College Union* (ACUI, 2009) as the community center or the living room of the college, one must recognize the value added to the student experience through “the interplay of the architecture, people, and ideas [that] makes the college union a truly
amazing entity” (Knell & Latta, 2006, p. 161). The student union will continue to serve as campus community center, and the facility must stay relevant to the student community. “Every institution must chart its own course to create a distinctive learning environment and campus culture that imbues the student experience with a sense of specialness” (Manning & Kuh, 2005, p. 4). Although the student union may not be the only location where such intentionality for inclusion and engagement is demonstrated, the facility and student affairs professionals should consistently led the way and set the standard for the campus to build and sustain community, both within the walls of the facility and across the campus.

As a paradigm, campus ecology helps describe the relationship between college students and the four environments of the college campus: human characteristics, organizational structures, college constructs and perceptions, and the physical environment (Strange & Banning, 2001). The ability to connect student engagement with physical space creates opportunities to plan student-centered facilities that purposely contribute to students’ sense of belonging and the campus community. One of the outcomes of campus community is the positive impact on student success, persistence, and graduation. As previously outlined, creating opportunities for students to connect is important to their success, and the student union can be an important contributing variable. This study demonstrates that purposefully designed physical spaces matter in making a positive impact on the campus community.


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Appendix A

Interview Protocol for “Student Union Transformation: A Case Study on Creating Purposeful Space”

Introduction
The purpose of this case study is to explore the influence of physical space of the student union on the interactions among students in the campus environment. Specifically, I am looking at the planning for two specific spaces in the newly renovated and expanded student union and how students are using the spaces. The Indiana University Institutional Review Board provided an exemption for this study and this project has been reviewed by the University of Houston Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects. Your participation is voluntary. There are no known benefits as a result of your participation in the interview, but there is a minimal risk that you may feel uncomfortable answering a question. At any time you may opt to end the interview and ask that your responses not be included in the study.

To begin,

1. Please describe the role(s) you had and which committee or committees you participated on during the student union project.
   a. How long did you serve?
   b. What was your status on campus during the time that you served on the student union project?

Next I would like to have you define the context for planning process.

There were six guidelines and priorities for the student union project in the 2008 master planning process. There were as follows:

- Create a one-of-a-kind experience, that epitomizes student life and student success
- Become the provider of choice for activities, services and facilities for the campus community
- Foster a sense of place by enhanced formal and informal spaces
- Enhance the food service program
- Cultivate a convenient and centralized retail zone
- Create a synergistic student organization center

2. Please describe how these guidelines were developed? How did you approach using these six guidelines in your discussions regarding the student union?
   a. NOTE: have the interviewee describe how the guidelines were or were not prioritized and, if so, for what reason.
Next I would like to explore the context for the desired physical space within the UC Transformation Project.

3. How did the guidelines influence your discussion on the new desired space during the planning phases? If not these guidelines, please describe the factors that shaped your conversation in respect to the types of physical spaces you wanted to see created through the student union project?
   a. NOTE: if the interviewee uses community in his/her description, ask him/her to expand on this topic if appropriate.
   b. NOTE: if the interviewee uses “inclusion” or “engagement” in their descriptions, ask him/her to expand on this topic if appropriate.

4. Please reflect on any conversations the members of the committee may have had about community and/or community building when considering the design of the space.
   a. In what ways did you anticipate the new design of the student union would support community and/or community building?
   b. Please describe how the committee may have defined community and/or community building during the conversations.
   c. NOTE: if the interviewee uses “organic,” “inclusion,” or “engagement” in descriptions, ask him/her to expand on this topic if appropriate.

5. To what extent were the concepts of or the words “safety,” “inclusion,” “involvement,” and “community” considered by the planning committee? Do you think these concepts were part of the guidelines? In what ways?

Lastly, I would like to ask you to reflect on the outcome of the UC Transformation Project.

6. Describe how you perceive the Monumental Stairwell and the Student Organization Center are being utilized?
   a. NOTE: if the interviewee uses “organic,” “community, “inclusion,” “involvement” or “engagement” in their descriptions, ask him/her to expand on this topic if appropriate.

Thank you very much for your participation. We are about to conclude the interview.

7. Is there anything that our conversation did not cover that you are thinking about in regard to the planning process or new physical space?
Appendix B

Email Invitation to Participants

Dear (insert name):

My name is Dan Maxwell, and I am a doctoral candidate in the higher education and student affairs program at Indiana University. For my dissertation, I am interested in studying the relationship between physical space and how it contributes to community building. More specifically, this is a case study of the newly renovated and expanded Student Center (formerly known as the University Center) at the University of Houston. The study aims to gain insight into how physical space contributes to and/or enhances the sense of community.

I am writing to invite you to participate in this project. As a member of the planning committee for the UC Transformation Project at the University of Houston, you have a unique perspective on the project. If you agree to participate, we will complete a single interview, approximately 60 to 90 minutes in length.

Those completing the interview will receive a $10 Starbucks gift card for their participation at the completion of the interview. However, your participation is entirely voluntary and you may remove yourself from this study at any time. Following the interview, I will contact you to share my transcriptions and ask for clarification if necessary.

Your name and contact information will be kept confidential during the research process and in the presentation of the study findings. All interviews will be recorded and then transcribed to Microsoft Word. The recordings will be destroyed at the completion of the study.

I will be referencing the University of Houston and the UC Transformation Project specifically during the research process and in the presentation of the study findings. This study has been granted an exemption by the Indiana University Human Subjects...
Office (IRB Study #1505846058). This project has been reviewed by the University of Houston Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (713) 743-9204.

The supervising faculty member for this research is Dr. Megan Palmer, and she can be reached at mmpalmer@iu.edu.

If you should have any questions and/or are interested in participating, please contact me by replying to this e-mail or phoning me at 317-517-1728. I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for your consideration.

Daniel M. Maxwell, MS Ed
Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education and Student Affairs
School of Education
Indiana University
Appendix C

Observation Protocol

In respect to the observations, Ann and I identified two different locations to capture as much of the activities and users of the space during the observation periods. We determined it would be best if one of us was located above the stairs looking down from one side but not directly at the top of the Monumental Stairway. The second location was at the base of the stairs at one of the high-top tables looking up. In neither location did we want our presence to interfere with the users of the space and their activities.

With respect to the Student Organization Center, Ann and I walked through the space two or three times each to explore different vantage points and possible obstructions in being able to see all of the individuals who might be in the space. We settled on rotating through the space with one of us going clockwise and the other counter-clockwise. We also determined that since we were both starting from the same spot (the west end of the space close to the main entrance) that we would rotate at different times and that we would both rotate at least twice through the space over the twenty-minute period.

The observations were completed on two different days, and there were four observations periods on each date at both sites. This process was selected so that each observer recorded as much activity as possible along with identifying visual demographics of individuals in both locations. The day of the week and the time of the day for the observations periods were determined based on existing resources. First, the student union staff monitors the Monumental Stairway and the Student Organization Center along with tracking event and meeting room usage for all reservable locations via an event management system. Second, there are installed traffic counters at the four entry points of the Student Organization Center, and there are reports set up
to distribute weekly updates of this space. The two different days were selected based on the historical activity in the overall Student Center based on meeting room reservation records, activities/events in the facility, and the number of individuals passing through the Student Organization Center. This usage data provided the necessary information to determine that the busier days in the Student Center are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday and the slower days are traditionally Monday and Friday not including the weekend. In using the records on the traffic patterns coming in and out of the Student Organization Center, we determined that four 20-minute time periods with an additional 10 minutes to review and edit our field notes would provide the necessary time to collect enough data to compare against each observation period. One set of observations was conducted on a Monday (a slow day) and one set of observations on a Tuesday (a busier day). The observation time periods on both days were as follows: 1) Monumental Stairway at 8:30-9:00 AM, 12:00-12:30 PM, 3:00-3:30 PM, and 6:30-7:00 PM, and 2) Student Organization Center at for the Monumental Stairway and 9:00-9:30 AM, 12:40-1:10 PM, 3:30-4:00 PM, and 7:00-7:30 PM.

The observations of the Monumental Stairway and the Student Organization Center took place over two different days with four observation periods on each day. The observation data were divided into three categories: users, activities, and length of time in and around the Monumental Stairway and in the Student Organization Center. The first category, users, documented the individuals and groups (e.g., numbers of) and the perceived demographics (e.g., age, race/ethnicity, and male/female). The second category presented observations on the types of activities and the frequency of those activities throughout the day. The final and third category reflected the length of time the individuals stayed during the observation periods.
Observation Rubric for “Student Union Transformation: A Case Study on Creating Purposeful Space”

Given the six principles utilized by the planning committee and the four variables in the Banning and Strange (2001) Campus Design Matrix, I created the following rubric for use during the observation times of both the monumental stairway and the student organization space.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation Rubric</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual or Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
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<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
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<td>Organization Affiliations</td>
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<td>Age</td>
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<td>Ability</td>
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<td>Comfort Level</td>
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<td>Unique Use Of Space (Describe)</td>
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<td>Length Of Stay</td>
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<td>Sleeping/Resting</td>
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<td>Sitting Quietly</td>
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<td>Reading</td>
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<td>Using Electronic Device</td>
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<td>Listening To Media</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other (List)</td>
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</table>
Appendix E: Design Guidelines

There were six guidelines and priorities for the student union project from the 2008 master planning process. There were as follows:

1. Create a one-of-a-kind experience, that epitomizes student life and student success

2. Become the provider of choice for activities, services and facilities for the campus community

3. Foster a sense of place by enhanced formal and informal spaces

4. Enhance the food service program

5. Cultivate a convenient and centralized retail zone

6. Create a synergistic student organization center
Curriculum Vitae

DANIEL M. MAXWELL

EDUCATION
Doctor of Education, Higher Education and Student Affairs with a minor in Philanthropic Studies
School of Education, Indiana University (IN), December 2016
   Dissertation Title, *Student Union Transformation: A Case Study on Creating Purposeful Space*
   Dr. Megan M. Palmer, Dissertation Director and Major Advisor

Master of Science in Education with an emphasis in Higher Education Leadership
College of Education and Allied Professions, University of Miami (FL), 1988

Bachelor of Science, Personnel and Industrial Relations
Crouse-Hinds School of Management, Syracuse University (NY), 1986

CAREER HISTORY

Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, UH System, 1/12 to present

Associate Vice President for Student Affairs, University of Houston (TX), 1/12 to present

The UH System comprises four universities and there are approximately 70,000 students with the UH System. The University of Houston is the largest and most comprehensive institution of the UH System. University of Houston is the leading public research university in the vibrant international city of Houston. There are more than 300 undergraduate and graduate academic programs with a current enrollment of over 43,000 students. There are 8,000 students living on campus, more 8,000 degrees awarded annually, and more than 230,000 alumni.

The role of the Associate Vice Chancellor/Associate Vice President for Student Affairs is to serve as principal advisor to and act in the absence of the Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Services (VPSAES), provide executive administrative support for Student Affairs for the University of Houston System (UHS), and provide executive administrative leadership for the Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services for the University of Houston (UH) which includes 30 departments/functional units in the division with 425+ exempt and non-exempt personnel and 1,000 student employees. Contribute to the financial management for an annual budget exceeding $325 million.

Provide leadership, strategic vision, organization and administrative oversight of campus-wide programs, services, and operations for the following departments and functional initiatives/units: Strategic Planning and Assessment, Marketing and Communication, Student Success Initiatives, Academic and Faculty Collaborations, Advancement, University Career Services, Urban Experience Program, UH Sugar Land, Emergency Management, Student Housing Initiatives, and Division Committees (Assessment, Marketing, and Professional Development). Contribute to the division’s use of best practices with major strides in assessment, external department reviews, and strategic planning – all of which have been built on a culture of assessment and continuous improvement to guide Divisional planning and resource allocation in the last four years.

Serve as the division liaison to Academic Affairs, Administration and Finance, Advancement, Equal Opportunity Services, and the Faculty Senate. Coordinate the infrastructure within the division to support all fundraising and grant development initiatives, act on Title IX student disciplinary appeals, and serve on the Faculty Senate’s Undergraduate Committee.
Selected Accomplishments

- Appointed by the Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Services and the Provost to serve as the Co-Liaison for the Foundations of Excellence, a comprehensive, evidence-based, externally guided self-study and improvement process to bring about transformational change in student success and retention of first-year and/or transfer students. Along with the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Student Success, continue to lead a multi-year process with over 200 faculty, staff and students involved. Currently finalizing recommendations and action plans in five areas: Advising, Integration, Culture, Communication, and Learning.

- Appointed by the Provost to serve on the Houston Guided Pathways to Success initiative with Complete College America and serve as the co-chairperson to the Structured Scheduling Task Force. The Houston Guided Pathway to Success (Houston GPS) is an integrated system of cohesive, interdependent strategies that are designed to increase and accelerate student completion and smooth two-year to four-year college transfer while improving educational quality for Houston area students. The University of Houston is leading the initiative in a collaborative partnership with the two four-year institutions and four two-year institutions in the greater Houston community.

- Appointed by the President to service on the UH Sugar Land Transition Team/UH Sugar Land Work Group and by the Provost to the UH Sugar Land Master Planning Work Group. A report was submitted by the UH Sugar Land Work Group with recommendations on building a financially viable UH branch campus in Sugar Land including Student Affairs and Enrollment Services functions. The Master Planning Work Group established specific academic, operational goals, benchmarks and timelines for launching the UH Sugar Land campus consistent with the broad recommendations of the UH Sugar Land Task Force. As the Chair for the Student Affairs Sub-Committee, initial services were identified and strategies implemented for the delivery of services in fall 2015.

- Appointed by the Vice President for Advancement to Chair the Programming Subcommittee of the UHAA Transition Committee. In a mutual agreement with the University of Houston and the UH Alumni Association Board, the UHAA agreed to be merged with the UH Division of Advancement to develop and implement a new alumni relations business model. The sub-committee reported provided recommendations to transform the delivery of programs and services from transactional to relational including recommendations for additional opportunities for alumni engagement.

- Appointed by the Vice President for Student Affairs and the Provost to serve as the Co-Chair of the Retention Work Group. The work group represented faculty, staff and students from Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. The work group charge was to identify all existing persistence and retention initiatives, programs and services across the campus. There were 66 such programs identified with recommendations on developing comprehensive assessment and date collection, shared resources, and enhancing impact on participants.

- Appointed by the Vice President for Student Affairs to Chair the Greek Life Task Force to complete a comprehensive review of the fraternity and sorority community at the University of Houston. The Greek Life Task Force provided insight on the current condition of the Greek community and established recommendations that would encourage the system to meet the evolving needs of UH’s diverse Greek organizations and their membership. The final report focused on four general areas: academic/student success, shared governance/expectations, growth, and community. The Center for Fraternity and Sorority Life continues to implement the recommendations.

- Appointed by the Vice President for Student Affairs to lead the development and implementation of a five-year strategic plan for the division. Worked directly with a consultant to facilitate initial meetings with the senior leadership team and two half-day retreats with the entire division. Led a team in the writing of the strategic plan, solicitation of feedback, and preparing the final
plan for approval. Facilitated department level presentations on the strategic plan and assisted in identifying how each department would contribute to the plan. Initiated the first iteration of tracking the plan across the division. The strategic plan contributes to division wide planning, funding, assessment activities, and advancement initiatives.

Institutional Involvement

- Chair, Student Affairs Council, Texas Medical Center
- Member, Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Topic Selection Committee
- Member, Campus Facilities Planning Committee
- Member, Rockwell Lecture Series and Farfel Lecture Series Committees
- Chair or Co-chair, Search Committees: AVC/AVP for Enrollment Services; Executive Director, Admissions; and, Executive Director, Health Services.
- Member, Search Committees: Executive Director, Scholarships and Financial Aid; Executive Director, Business Services; Director, Emergency Preparedness; and, Director, University Real Estate.

Interim Executive Director, University Career Services, University of Houston (TX), 11/13 – 7/14

Concurrently served in this role while serving as the Associate Vice Chancellor/Associate Vice President for Student Affairs. Held this position until a new Executive Director was hired.

Provided direct leadership, strategic vision, and oversight to University Career Services department and supervised 15 full-time career services professionals and managed financial oversight with budget responsibility for $800,000+ annual budget. Reinforced and enhanced the department’s student employment services function on campus as the point of contact for all college work study positions. Strengthened strategies for assisting undecided students in making career and academic decisions that are consistent with individual student interests, aptitudes and goals.

Fostered relationships and developed communication networks with key university personnel and community entities to increase awareness of career services. Evaluated existing counseling services and educational programs to better meet the needs of undergraduate and graduate students, instructional and administrative faculty, and employers.

Facilitated a multi-phase process to create vision and value statements along with the rewriting of the mission statement. Developed comprehensive goals, objectives, and short and long-range plans guiding the operations of the department, and ensures that established goals and objectives are communicated and obtained. Updated the UCS website for easier access to the programs, services and activities designed for students, faculty and recruiters/employers.

Director, Campus Center, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IN), 7/06 – 1/12

IUPUI is Indiana's premier urban university, with 20 schools and academic units which grant degrees in more than 200 programs from both Indiana University and Purdue University. The current enrollment is 30,000 with 1,300 students living on campus.

The Campus Center construction began in October 2005 and opened to the community on January 7, 2008. The newly created director position was hired 18 months prior to the scheduled opening to create the infrastructure of the department. Developed and administered programs and services for the first Campus Center at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. The Director initially reported to the Vice Chancellor for Student Life and reported to the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Life after the facility opened up.
Participated in all levels of construction of the 250,000 gross square foot facility in consultation with the University Architect Office and all principal players, including the general contractor, managing architect firm, and university departments affiliated with the project. Coordinated outreach efforts to the campus community on updates with Campus Center during and post construction. Concurrently developed a staff structure, designed position descriptions, and created a hiring timeline. Supervised and evaluated an Associate Director, three Assistant Directors, a Program Coordinator, a Graduate Assistant, an Administrative Secretary and 45 student employees. Created and provided financial management for an annual operating budget of $775,000 and assisted in long term financial planning. Provided assistance in the creation of a funding grant for registered student organizations to host programs and activities in the Campus Center. Developed, coordinated and managed assessment and strategic planning initiatives.

Created and managed the Campus Center Advisory Board representing faculty, staff and students, and the Campus Center Partners Group representing the tenants. Created, implemented and assessed policies and procedures for the facility. Assisted in the creation of the emergency procedures, the emergency preparedness plan, and the Business Continuity Plan for the Campus Center. Developed and assessed an interactive website for the Campus Center.

Developed an honorary naming program to provide recognition to individuals’ past contributions to the IUPUI community which reflect the values of the Campus Center. Facilitated the installation of two honorary names as identified by the IUPUI Advisory Board. Assisted the IU Foundation in cultivating donors for the Campus Center.

Selected Accomplishments

- Developed an on-going culture of assessment for the Campus Center including an annual review of all policies and procedures. Led the staff through the integration of the Principles of Undergraduate Learning (campus based academic learning outcomes) and the Service with Distinction campus-based customer service program with student employment positions in the Campus Center. This initiative provided an opportunity to align learning outcomes with performance evaluations and strengthen the recognition program.
- Appointed by the Vice Chancellor for Student Life to represent the division on the Multicultural Center Concept Committee. The committee explored various iterations of cultural centers and specifically such centers at urban institutions. The final report to the Assistant Chancellor for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Diversity and Inclusion provided recommendations for the infrastructure, programming, and staffing for a center at IUPUI.
- Appointed by the Vice Chancellor for Student Life to represent the division on the Graduate Enhancement Task Force. Led by the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies at IUPUI, the task force explored academic and student life initiatives to improve the graduate student experience at IUPUI.
- Served on a core team to develop and implement a Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Faculty Staff Council at IUPUI. Served as the president of the council for two terms. The LGBT FSC contributed to expanding the IUPUI Campus Climate survey to include questions related to safety and inclusion in the context of sexual orientation/identity.

Institutional Involvement

- Chairperson and Member, Student Life Professional Development Committee
- Member, Division of Student Life Assessment Committee
- Chairperson, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Auxiliary Services Search Committee
- Chairperson, Director of Student Involvement Search Committee
- Member, Associate Director of the Multicultural Center Search Committee
Interim Director, Housing and Residence Life, Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis (IN), 3/11 – 7/11.

Concurrently served in this role while serving as the Director of the Campus Center. Held this position until a new Director was hired.

Provided vision, leadership, and supervision for the university student housing and residence life during the transition of the outgoing director and prior to the arrival of the new director. Supervised 11 fulltime professional staff, 11 housekeeping and maintenance staff, 3 graduate students, 35 RAs, 4 undergraduates for academic support, and 4 undergraduate social justice educators. Developed, managed and monitored the annual operating budget of $8 million and work with other University departments to develop and implement an on-going, annual financial plan. Managed the interpretation and enforcement of housing contract policies, publications, facility maintenance, assignments, marketing, leasing development and overall administrative functions. Administered policies, protocols and procedures across a broad continuum of responsibilities.

Provided overall leadership for Housing and Residence Life program that creates a safe experiential learning experience for all 1,300 residents. Supported residential communities that utilize best practices in student development and research to create engaging, learning environments. Provided leadership for departmental strategic planning efforts.

Developed a positive work environment through expectations, team building, and professional development that facilitates a dynamic cohesive high performing team. Led outreach efforts with academic deans, department chairs, professional staff, and faculty to develop a learning communities-based education program for residents.

Selected Accomplishments

- Proposed, led, and coordinated the construction of new administrative office space to centralize the operation of the administrative staff which were in several locations across the campus. This effort provided many opportunities for the administrative staff to work together to define their work environment and contribute to dissolving the working silos within the department. The project also included expanding the convenient store operations in to a centralized space for greater access to the residents and the creation of new community office space for the residents of the on-campus apartment community.

- Facilitated a review of the current operation functions of the department which led to the development of decentralized approach at the residence hall level to better serve students in a timelier manner.

Director, Office of Student Activities, Western Illinois University (IL), 7/98 – 6/06.

Development Officer, Division of Student Services, Western Illinois University (IL), 7/05 – 6/06.

WIU serves more than 12,000 students at its traditional, residential four-year campus and its upper-division urban commuter location. WIU offers undergraduate and graduate programs along with 1 doctoral program. Over 4,000 students live on campus in the residence halls community.

Developed and administered programs and services for the Office of Student Activities and reported to the Associate Vice President for Student Services. Supervised and evaluated an Associate Director, four Assistant Directors, a Technical Director and Assistant Director, a Graphic Support Advisor, ten graduate assistants and two support staff members. Managed the day-to-day operations and all financial matters for the department with an annual operating budget of $800,000. Directed the leadership planning and policy development for the student life co-curriculum and provided strategic oversight to the following units: campus wide programming, a student sound and lighting company, fraternities and sororities, volunteer services, leadership programs, a student organization center and multicultural programs and
services. Advised the Student Government Association and their councils: Council on Student Information Technology and the Council on Student Activities Funds. Coordinated the Talent Grant program and the Visiting Lectures Committee.

Selected Accomplishments

- Nominated by the Vice President for Student Services and appointed by the Provost to serve on the North Central Accreditation executive team and chair one of the criterion committees.
- Appointed by the Vice President for Student Services to represent the division in the University’s comprehensive capital campaign and coordinate the division’s participation in the annual fund campaign. This was the first time the division had a dedicated staff member focused on the annual fund and contributing in the planning.
- Developed and implemented a campus wide theme program through an initiative to create greater understanding and commitment to collaborative programming across departments and student organizations. The Task Force was supported by the Vice President for Student Services and was encouraged to open the membership up to faculty. Over the course of a year, a three-year proposal was submitted to the Vice President and President for an annual theme which would be sustained through a common reading experience, campus speakers and leadership programs.
- Developed and coordinated the creation of the Student Organization Center in a vacated dining space of the student union. Hosted focus groups with the larger, programmatic student organizations that did not have any dedicated space except for the Student Government Association. Created office space for approximately 15 student organizations including new space for the Student Government Association; the new space provided a central place for all student organizations to interact, reserve a meeting room, receive mail services, and connect with one another.

Professional Speaker/Presenter, CAMPUSPEAK, Inc., 8/98 to 5/04.
CAMPUSPEAK, Inc. is the nation’s premier agency providing educational speakers and programs for college campuses and organizations. Topics include: diversity, leadership and retreat facilitation.

Assistant Director, Arizona Student Unions, University of Arizona (AZ), 7/96 – 6/98.
A public research university serving over 38,000 undergraduate, graduate and professional students; the mission is to provide a comprehensive, high-quality education that engages students in discovery through research and broad-based scholarship. Approximately 6,350 students live in on-campus housing.

Provided leadership, strategic vision, organization and administrative oversight for the Arizona Student Unions, provided leadership for the Office of Student Programs, and coordinated selected Human Resource functions. Reported to the Executive Director as a member of the senior management team, and assisted in the administrative budget process of an annual budget over $15 million. Directed and administered the 15-member staff and student volunteers in the Office of Student Programs, and the Union’s movie theater, the recreation/games room, and three art galleries. Facilitated a campus wide evaluation of student leadership programs to determine new strategic initiatives for the Office of Student Programs. Coordinated a student employee wage evaluation for the Unions along with the development of a student employee handbook and training program. Implemented an employee training and development program, a student employee orientation, and an employee recognition for the 400+ employees (full time, part time and students).

Selected Accomplishment

- Appointed by the President to serve as the Co-Chairperson and Member, University Ombudsman Committee. The University Ombudsman Committee, better known as the Ombuds Program, was established to create an alternative resource for conflict resolution on the
University of Arizona campus. It did not replace or supplant other means of resolving conflicts or solving problems. It was and remains an informal, neutral, confidential and independent resource for parents, students, faculty and staff.

Institutional Involvement
- Member, Dean of Students to the Crisis Management Committee
- Member, Student Unions’ Renovation and Expansion Committee.
- Member, Parents Association Steering Committee
- Member, Sexual Assault Task Force
- Member, Dance Advisory Board (College of Fine Arts/School of Music and Dance)

**Director, Department of Student Programs, University of Arizona (AZ), 2/95 - 7/96.**

**Interim Director, Department of Student Programs, University of Arizona (AZ), 6/94 - 2/95.**

Provided leadership, strategic vision, organization and administrative oversight for the Department of Student Programs and reported to the Associate Dean of Students. Provided supervision to 10 full-time employees, three graduate assistants, 10 student staff members and 50 paraprofessionals. Provided financial management and budget responsibility for an annual budget of $500,000. The department includes the following units, functional initiatives, and programming areas: Campus Activities, Center for Off-Campus Students, Center for Service Learning, Collegiate Institute for Leadership, Greek Life Programs, University Activities Board, Family Weekend, concert programs, student government, Project Volunteer, Break-Away program, community service connections, Panhellenic Association, Interfraternity Council, National Pan Hellenic Council, 46 fraternities and sororities, KAMP Student Radio, leadership classes for credit, recognition process of student organizations, opening of school activities and the co-curricular policies. Monitored and managed the day-to-day activities on the Mall and the Free Speech Area.

**Assistant Director for Greek Life Programs, Department of Student Programs, University of Arizona (AZ), 10/92 - 6/94.**

Developed and administered the Greek Life Programs unit and supervised the University Mall and Free Speech area. Supervised the full-time Coordinator of Greek Life and the undergraduate student assistant. Advised and assessed the needs of three governing bodies and programming council for 4,500+ student members, the officers of 46 national men's and women's fraternities, and budgets totaling $200,000. Administered the Greek Life Auxiliary Budget program and managed a budget of $95,000. Developed, assisted with administering and monitored the University Village Area Plan, Neighborhood Relations programs, Greek Housing, Alumni Relations and risk and liability reduction programs. Advised a seven member student peer judicial board. Designed, presented and evaluated leadership and education programs for the Greek and University communities. Administered day-to-day operations of the Mall which includes monitoring First Amendment Rights, crisis intervention and campus demonstrations.

**Greek Life Coordinator, Office of Student Activities and Organizations, University of Arizona (AZ), 7/90 - 10/92.**

Administered and supervised the overall operations of the fraternity and sorority systems which consisted of 5,000+ members, 43 national men's and women's fraternities, and four governing councils. Advised a seven member student peer judicial board, the Order of Omega Academic Honorary, a diversity education
committee, and an alcohol education and policy monitoring organization. Expanded the Faculty Fellows Program, a joint program with the Dean of Students and Provost offices to create spaces in student centered locations to host office hours, to include Faculty Fellows in both a fraternity and sorority chapter house. Designed, presented and evaluated leadership and education programs. Maintained membership records and prepared statistics on membership, academic standards, house capacity and occupancy, chapter financing, rushing and pledging. Served as a liaison to alumni chapter advisors and national headquarters.

Advisor to Greek Letter Organizations, Office of Leadership and Student Organizations, Syracuse University (NY), 6/89 - 7/90.

Syracuse University is a private, coeducational institution offering programs in the physical sciences and modern languages. The enrollment is 20,407 with undergraduate, graduate and law school students. Over 7,000 students live in on-campus housing.

Administered and supervised the overall operations of the fraternity and sorority community and reported to the Director of Leadership and Student Organizations. The fraternity and sorority community which consisted of 3,800 members, 50 fraternities and sororities, four governing councils, and the Order of Omega. Selected, trained, supervised, and evaluated of two graduate assistants and provided fiscal management and budget responsibility of a $46,000 department budget and advising four governing bodies' with budgets totaling $68,000. Served as advisor in the planning and implementation of Greek and University-wide events; administered neighborhood relations programs, housing policies and Greek Housing Expansion; and, advised disciplinary procedures with the four governing bodies' judicial branches. Served liaison to the alumni chapter advisors and the national headquarters staff.

Residence Director, Office of Residence Services, Syracuse University (NY), 7/88 - 6/89.

Developed and administered programs and services for the Office of Residence Services, managed a residence hall for 500 freshmen and sophomore residents, and reported to the Area Coordinator of the department. Selected, trained, developed, supervised and evaluated a full-time assistant director, a full-time receptionist, and 15 Resident Advisors. Provided leadership and strategic oversight for a variety of programs in the six developmental areas of: autonomy, purpose, relationships, intellect, personal responsibility, and self-concept to foster the developmental growth of students. Coordinated crisis management in the residence hall, served on-call for the housing system, and served as the co-advisor to the peer judicial board for the department.

PUBLICATIONS & ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES


Member, Editorial Board Review Team, ACPA’s Journal of College Student Development, 9/10 to 1/12

Member, Review Board Team, Indiana University Student Personnel Association’s Journal, 1/10 to 1/12

Clinical Instructor, Indiana University, Higher Education and Student Affairs, Practicum Course, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis campus, spring 2009

CONSULTATIONS

Program Review Team, Student Center, Tarleton State University, Association of College Unions International, College Union and Student Activities Consultation, spring 2016

Program Review Team, Memorial Union and Student Involvement & Leadership, University of North
Dakota, Association of College Unions International, College Union and Student Activities Consultation, spring 2015

Administrative Program Review Team, A.K Hinds University Center, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC, spring 2012 (chairperson)

Program Review Team, Office of Student Activities, Belmont University, Nashville, TN, fall 2010

Program Review Team, Office of Campus and Community Life, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis, Indianapolis, IN, spring 2009

Program Review Team, Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life, Illinois Wesleyan University, Bloomington, IL, spring 2008 (chairperson)

Program Review Team, Office of Student Activities, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL, spring 2005

Program Review Team, Office of Greek Life, State University of New York (SUNY) College at Oneonta, Oneonta, NY, spring 1990

COMMUNITY BASED LEADERSHIP INSTITUTES AND INVOLVEMENT
St. Stephen’s Episcopal School (Houston, TX), 2016 – present
Member, Board of Trustees. St. Stephen’s Episcopal School provides a cohesive and globally focused education for students 15 months–12th grade. Using the curricula of Montessori, International Middle Years Curriculum (IMYC), and the International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme, students are encouraged to become effective global citizens and lifelong learners.

United Way of Central Indiana (Indianapolis, IN), 2006 – 2007
Leadership United is a comprehensive community leadership and board development program of United Way of Central Indiana. During the nine-month term, participants commit to approximately 10 business days of training, or roughly one day per month.

Macomb Area Chamber of Commerce (Macomb, IL), 1999
Community Leadership Academy provides education in order to foster responsible, volunteer, leadership positions in the community. During the 12-sessions, a featured speaker presents an overview of their respective functional area followed by group led leadership development activities.

Greater Tucson Leadership (Tucson, AZ), 1994
Greater Tucson Leadership (GTL) is a non-profit, non-partisan leadership organization dedicated to providing leadership education, community development and civic engagement for the overall care of and commitment to the Tucson community. The annual leadership class expands the participants’ knowledge of the region and become strong community leaders. GTL provides a platform to create understanding of community and critical issues, encourage discussion and problem-solving, cultivate appreciation for differing perspectives and inspire leadership at all levels of our community. Presented on GTL’s Diversity Issues Day for the 1995, 1996 and 1997 spring classes.

HONORS
James E. Scott Outstanding Mid-Level Student Affairs Professional Award, NASPA Region III, 2016
Society of Fellows of the Honors College, University of Houston, 2016
The Order of Minerva, Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity, 2015 and 2012
Order of the Lion, Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity, 2008
Chapter Advisor of the Year, Fraternity and Sorority Life, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis, 2009
Administrative Employee of the Month, Student Services, Western Illinois University, 2/2005 and 3/2001
Distinguished Service Award, Region 9, Association of College Unions International, 2003
Outstanding Contributions to the Campus Community, President’s Affirmative Action Committee, Western Illinois University, 2003
Golden Key Honorary, Honorary Membership, 2003
Merit Key, Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity, 2002
Golden Apple Award, Student Alumni Council, Western Illinois University, 1999
Distinguished Service Award, Association of Fraternity Advisors, 1997
Martin Luther King, Jr. Distinguished Leadership Award, University of Arizona, 1993
Certification of Appreciation, Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Association, University of Arizona, 1992

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND ASSOCIATION INVOLVEMENT
Association of College Union International, 1996 to present
  - Member, Research Program Team, June 2015 - present
  - Member, Global Diversity & Inclusion Benchmarking Report, May 2014
  - Chairperson, Educational and Research Fund, 2006 - 2009
  - President (2 term), President Elect and Member of the Board of Trustees, 2003 - 2006
  - Regional Director, 2001 – 2003
  - Education Coordinator for Region 9, 1999 – 2001
  - ILEAD and STEP Volunteer Coordinator, 1999 – 2001
  - Member of the Committee on Educational Programs and Services, 1999 – 2001
  - Indiana Professional Development Seminar, Indiana Memorial Union, 1996

ACPA - College Student Educators International, 1988 to present
  - Member, Commission IV’s Program Selection Committee, 1994
  - Member, Directorate Body for Commission IV, 1990 – 1993
  - Chair, New Professionals Committee, 1992-1993
  - Chair, Greek Affairs Committee, 1991-1992
  - Member, Host Committee for National Convention, 1988

Association of Fraternity Advisors and AFA Foundation, 1987 to 2007
  - Vice Chair for Development, AFA Foundation, 2000 – 2002
  - Liaison, Association of Student Judicial Affairs, 1996
  - Western Regional Vice President, 1995
  - Chairperson, National Conference, 1994
  - Chairperson, Marketing and Membership Development Committee, 1992

Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis, 2006 - 2012
    - An Introduction, 1/12/10
    - Higher Education, 3/19/10
  - Individual and Group Crisis Intervention and Peer Support training, 3/10

National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 1991 to present
  - Member, AVP Steering Committee, 2016 - present
Member, AVP Pre-Conference Planning Committee, National Conference Committee, 2016
Member, Program Proposal Review Team, National Conference, 2015, 2016
Presenter, NASPA Student Affairs Fundraising & External Relations Conference, 2014
Institute for Aspiring Senior Student Affairs Officers, 2011
Member, Region IV-East Conference Committee, 2005
Dorothy Keller Academy for New Professionals San Diego State University, 1991

National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition
   Member, Proposal Review Committee, 34th Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience (2015)

Sigma Alpha Epsilon National Fraternity, 1984 to present
   Member, Extension Advisory Committee, 2005 - 2007
   Regional Vice President, New York State, 1989 – 1990

Society for College and University Planning, 2004 to present
   Presenter, “Active Learning Environments” panel presentation, Southern Symposium, 2014

Texas Association of College & University Student Personnel Administrators, 2012 - present
   Presenter, Annual Conference, “Constructing Strategic Alliances across the Campus Community”, 2014
   Member, Conference Committee, Keynote Speakers Chair, 2013

Western Regional Greek Conference, 1991 - 2000
   Executive Director, 1998 – 2000
   Assistant Executive Director, 1995 – 1998
   Faculty Advisor, 1992 – 1995