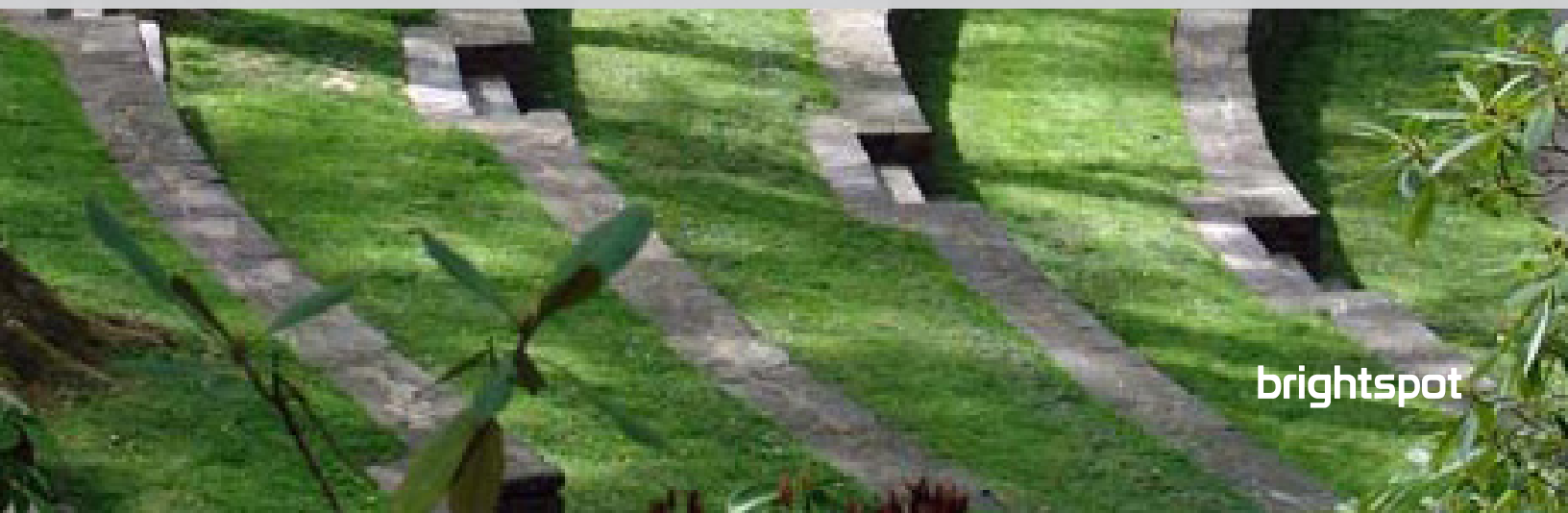




SWARTHMORE COLLEGE

STUDENT EXPERIENCE VISIONING STUDY REPORT

FEBRUARY 2017



brightspot

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PARTICIPANTS (SEE PAGE 7 FOR FULL ROSTER)

- Senior Leadership Team
- Advisory Committee (including Swarthmore leadership, staff, faculty, students and Alumni Council representatives)
- Space Matters Student Committee
- Swarthmore faculty and student services staff
- General Student Population

APPROACH

brightspot partnered with Swarthmore College (the College) administrators, leadership, staff, faculty, and students in a highly participatory visioning study to examine the current student experience outside of the classroom. During the process, brightspot engaged participants through workshops, interviews, forums, and walking tours, to build understanding, ideas, and consensus. They shared the feedback they received with community members in a variety of settings for further response and synthesis, culminating in a vision for the future and ideas for how to achieve it. This vision is illustrated through:

- guiding principles
- student needs
- emerging strategies
- future experience maps

Together they communicate key opportunities to improve the student experience and pave the way for future planning activities.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Understand the current student experience at Swarthmore
- Envision the future student experience at Swarthmore
- Identify opportunities to improve the experience, including concepts for spaces and services
- Achieve the three previous objectives through a participatory process that engages students, faculty, and staff, and aligns with the culture and values of Swarthmore College

VISION

The vision for the future student experience comprises of three guiding principles:

- 1. Community and Belonging:** The College will foster a welcoming, inclusive “community of communities” where all voices are welcome, respected and heard.
- 2. Growth and Development:** We will create an environment that nurtures the intellectual, social and ethical development of our students.
- 3. Exploration and Curiosity:** We will create a supportive and productive environment where students can explore ideas, push boundaries and challenge themselves and others.

EMERGING STRATEGIES

Emerging strategies were developed and prioritized through conversations and workshops with students, faculty, staff, alumni, leadership, and the Board of Managers. They aim to address the needs of students and achieve the future vision for the student experience at Swarthmore.

The strategies take several forms including spaces, services, communications, policy, and programs. They lay the groundwork for future development and planning efforts with the involvement of the Swarthmore community.

NEXT STEPS

In the near term, members of the community will have opportunities to refine concepts and participate in prototyping strategies on campus.

In the longer term, strategies will be implemented through capital planning projects as well as service, communication, policy, and program solutions.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Swarthmore partnered with brightspot strategy to develop a vision for the student experience outside of the classroom. This process included campus workshops and events that provided community members of the College community to offer responses and feedback.

APPROACH

During the first stage of the project we focused on understanding needs and developing a vision for the student experience at Swarthmore. In the second stage of the project, we developed strategies to address the identified needs and vision, and initiated conversations about prototyping and prioritizing ideas.

The visioning study built on and was informed by previous planning work of the College, including the Strategic Plan which, as well as the Campus Master Plan, outlines principles to "guide the physical development of the campus in a way that will:

Connect — Create a dynamic campus with well-defined pathways providing a natural flow between buildings and grounds. Swarthmore seeks to create an inclusive, engaged community through a collection of distinct spaces that relate well to one another, the larger campus, and the surrounding community.

Sustain — Promote sustainable practices through the arboretum's natural resources as well as energy-efficient buildings that provide spaces to connect people with one another and with their environment.

Innovate — Create flexible places to support our community now and in the future—spaces offering a variety of scales and functions that holistically support academic endeavors as well as student and community life.

Cultivate — Enhance the simplicity and beauty of the campus to support individual growth and creativity, the intellectual and cultural life of the community, and our engagement with the world."

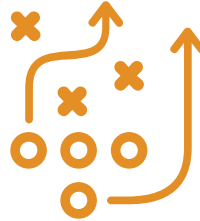
PROJECT PROCESS



understand needs



craft vision



*develop and prioritize
strategies*



*create service,
communication, program,
policy, and capital
planning solutions*

PROJECT TEAM

Core Team

Greg Brown
Susan Eagar
Mynetta Edwards
Jan Semler

Sr. Leadership Team

Liz Braun Greg
Brown
Karl Clauss
Susan Eagar
Jan Semler
Stu Hain
Valerie Smith
Tom Stephenson

Advisory Committee

Amber Adamson
Jackie Helene Bailey-
Ross Peter Baumann
Jim Bock
John Caskey
H.G. Chissell, IV
Joel Cooper
Anthony Coschignano
Elise Cummings
Logan Grider
Rachel Head
Jesus Hernandez
Adam Hertz
Sharmaine LaMar

Kelley Meagher
Pamela Prescod-Caesar
Peggy Seiden
David Singleton
Aurora Winslade

VISION + GUIDING PRINCIPLES

THE VISION

OVERVIEW

In the summer of 2016, the brightspot team engaged the Senior Leadership Team and the Advisory Committee (including students, faculty, staff, leadership, and alumni) in initial visioning conversations about the ideal student experience at Swarthmore. Discussions highlighted the core values of the College and the key dimensions of the “whole student” experience outside of the classroom, providing an initial framework to guide student research and engagement throughout the visioning study.

The common themes and key ideas resulting from these sessions culminated in a vision for the student experience, defined by three guiding principles. Throughout the fall semester brightspot shared these guiding principles with students, faculty, board members, alumni and staff to gather feedback and shape the vision.



Visioning Session with Advisory Committee

The Swarthmore College student experience will express these core values (detailed on the next page):

- ① **Community and Belonging**
- ② **Growth and Development**
- ③ **Exploration and Curiosity**

THE VISION

① Community and Belonging

The College will foster a welcoming, inclusive “community of communities” where all voices are welcome, respected and heard.

Swarthmore will...

- foster communication across communities of students.
- provide spaces for having fun and relaxing with friends informally.
- foster a sense of belonging to the broader Swarthmore College community.
- address accessibility limitations and isolation in spaces to
 - ensure program access
 - counteract the feeling that some areas of campus are off limits.
 - address the sense of isolation that students feel in some of the residence halls.

② Growth and Development

We will create an environment that nurtures the intellectual, social, and ethical development of our students.

Swarthmore will...

- inspire students to pursue their passions and provide support their efforts to achieve a reasonable equilibrium between academic and co-curricular pursuits.
- foster a rigorous and earnest culture while promoting opportunities for fun and play.
- encourage growth through a challenge-and-support model and improve the “entry points” for support services.
- provide continued support for event planning and provide students with skills for “building an audience” while incentivizing and encouraging collaborative programming involving multiple student groups.

3 Exploration and Curiosity

We will create a supportive and productive environment where students can explore ideas, push boundaries, and challenge themselves and others.

Swarthmore will...

- provide a place for students to challenge themselves, while also fostering a culture where students can ask for help when necessary.
- support students on their personal journey while encouraging them to remain open to others' perspectives and values.
- encourage and support exploration of extra-curricular pursuits in cross-cultural understanding, recreation and the visual and performing arts.

UNDERSTANDING STUDENT NEEDS



UNDERSTANDING STUDENT NEEDS

APPROACH

To build and refine an understanding of Swarthmore student needs, brightspot and the Senior Leadership Team engaged the Swarthmore community to hear from students, faculty, staff, board members, and alumni in a variety of settings (including small targeted meetings, interviews, open campus forums, workshops, and tabling). Throughout the process, findings were synthesized and shared back with participants to solicit further feedback.



Student Experience Workshop

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

- Advisory Committee participation
- Eight Student Walking Tours
- Student Forum
- Campus Forum
- Space Matters Student Committee Workshop
- Student Experience Workshop
- Meeting with Presidential Sustainability Research Fellows

FACULTY ENGAGEMENT

- Advisory Committee participation
- Campus Forum
- Student Experience Workshop
- Faculty Forum

SENIOR LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

- Advisory Committee participation
- Senior Leadership Workshops
- Campus Forum
- Student Experience Workshop
- Board of Managers presentations

STAFF ENGAGEMENT

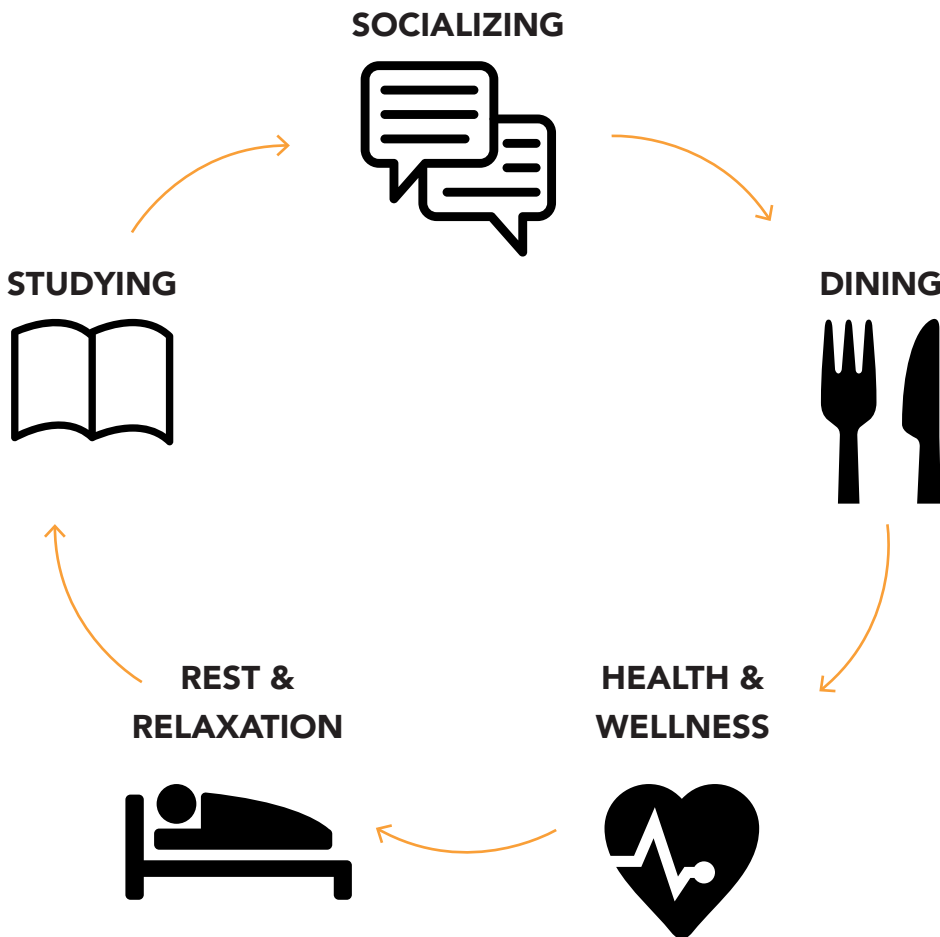
- Advisory Committee participation
- Campus Forum
- Six Student Services Staff Interviews
- Student Experience Workshop

ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

- Advisory Committee participation
- Board of Managers presentations
- Student Experience Workshop

MODES OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Early conversations with Swarthmore students and the Advisory Committee – as well as initial findings from external peer benchmarking – led to a framework for understanding key modes of the Swarthmore student experience. The modes represent the primary types of activities that students pursue outside the classroom. Throughout the visioning study, they were used to frame discussion about the ideal student experience, both now and in the future. The following pages highlight what we heard from students in relation to these modes.



STUDENT FEEDBACK

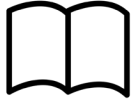


Science Center, Eldridge Commons

STUDENT MODES

OVERVIEW

**WHERE ARE
STUDENTS DOING
THIS?**



Studying



Socializing



Dining



Health & Wellness



Rest & Relaxation

Studying and socializing happen simultaneously due to limited space and intense academic culture. Studying spills over into social spaces.

Students want to feel that it's okay to take a break. There is a shortage of spaces for socializing and many clubs, which causes competition, driving low attendance (few spaces; spaces feel "owned.")

Students want their preferences for food choices and availability to be honored. Limited options & long lines are causing students to skip meals or eat in a rush. Sharples is one of the few spaces to socialize.

Students have a difficult time living a healthy lifestyle. Students may wait too long to ask for help if overwhelmed. Demand for mental health resources exceeds the resources & specializations provided.

Mixed year housing is a positive experience which helps create friendships and mentorships. Students want their peers to be held accountable for the cleanliness of kitchens / shared living spaces.

residence rooms, student lounges, classrooms, McCabe Library, Cornell Library Eldridge Commons, the Scott Amphitheater

residence rooms, student lounges, classrooms, Sharples Dining Hall, the gardens, outdoor seating, club spaces

Sharples, Essie Mae's Snack Bar, "the Ville," occasionally Philadelphia and Media

Matchbox, classrooms, athletic facilities, Crum Woods

residence rooms, lounges, classrooms, gardens, the Scott Amphitheater

IDENTIFIED NEEDS

Several needs emerged through a series of conversations with the Swarthmore community to reflect on the current student experience and the three guiding principles.



Upper Tarble, Activities Fair



SwatDeck participants

NEED TO INCREASE INTERACTION ACROSS STUDENT GROUPS

- Increase collaboration and awareness across student groups
- Support students in learning to build and engage an audience
- Support exploring / learning about opposing views, resolving conflict
- Create campus-wide events/ opportunities to come together and improve Swarthmore pride



McCabe Library



Residence Hall Kitchen

NEED TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND VARIETY OF SPACES (INCLUDING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY & ACCESSIBILITY)

- Improve quality of spaces (update McCabe, residence halls, athletic facilities, event spaces)
- Address feeling of "haves and have-nots" in residence halls
- Increase study space options
- Decrease sense of competition for space (there isn't enough flexible space to support faculty, staff and student activities / interactions)



Science Center, Eldridge Commons



Parrish Hall Parlors

NEED TO TRANSITION EASILY BETWEEN SPACES, AND ACTIVITIES

- Enable students to fluidly transition from one activity to another (studying, eating, exercising, etc.)
- Create flexible multi-functional spaces like a "maker space"



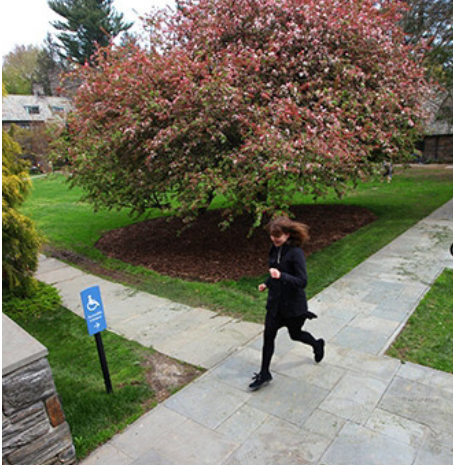
Cornell Library



Scott Arboretum

NEED TO TAKE A BREAK

- Provide opportunities to take breaks from studying / integrate healthy habits
- Provide social-only spaces separate from study / social spaces
- Provide a space where it's okay to be loud and blow off steam
- Provide more event space, party venues
- Leverage outdoors / arboretum
- Encourage more fun / play



Campus Accessibility



CAPS

NEED TO SUPPORT STUDENT AWARENESS OF / ACCESS TO SERVICES AND SPACES

- Increase visibility and simplify access to student support services
- Ensure accessibility to all programs and events



Sharples (line at servery entrance)



Sharples servery

NEED A MORE VARIED FOOD EXPERIENCE

- Provide a wider variety of options, increased access
- Provide smaller-scale dining experiences (1-on-1 dining)
- Enable more independent food experiences (e.g., cooking)



SEPTA Train Station



Philadelphia

NEED TO ACCESS EXPERIENCES BEYOND SWARTHMORE

- Create opportunities to get out of the Swarthmore bubble
- Support students getting off campus to gain perspective and reduce stress

**EMERGING STRATEGIES
+ NEXT STEPS**

EMERGING STRATEGIES

APPROACH

The emerging strategies were developed and prioritized through conversations and workshops with students, faculty, staff, alumni, leadership, and the Board of Managers. They aim to address the needs of students and achieve the future vision for the student experience at Swarthmore.

These strategies lay the groundwork for future development and planning efforts with the involvement of the Swarthmore community.

PRINCIPLES FOR NEXT STEPS



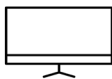









In developing and implementing strategies, the following principles (developed by the Advisory Committee and Senior Leadership) should be considered:












- Engage all constituents in creative problem-solving
- Establish governance structure for next phase (including pilots, prototyping, policy discussions)
- Ensure that prototypes and solutions reflect our institutional commitment to sustainability and accessibility
- Build upon efforts that are already underway
- Test the feasibility of solutions and prototype before building
- Aim for flexible use of spaces
- Consider budget implications of proposed changes relative to other institutional priorities such as economic diversity, expanding enrollment, and changing faculty course load
- Continuously communicate project process



EMERGING STRATEGIES

The strategies take several forms including spaces, services, communications, policy, and programs. The highest impact strategies (as identified by the Advisory Committee) are highlighted in blue. The strategies are not in ranked order.

		space	service	communication	policy	program
	Facilitate connections between groups with similar interests (e.g. organization/club inventory, procedures to start a new club).					
	Bridge different interest groups (e.g. incentivize attendance at peer events, collaboration between groups; create lounge/ informal space near/within athletics facilities).					
	Create digital signage featuring campus events, student clubs and student work.					
	Provide a community gathering space that accommodates large (campus-wide) and small events.					
	Create "social only" spaces.					
	Address building and programmatic obsolescence of athletics facilities (e.g. building systems, locker rooms, public/lobby spaces).					
	Provide a uniform, high-quality experience in residence halls and create norms for use/clean-up of shared areas.					
	Address functional obsolescence of libraries (e.g. furnishings, types / variety of seating, lighting).					
	Address programmatic obsolescence of dining facility (e.g. servery at Sharples).					
	Provide greater variety in dining (e.g. ability to customize menu options, locations other than Sharples).					
	Improve/create pathways to student services (e.g. re-think student service touchpoints).					
	Increase access to and awareness of mental and physical health resources.					

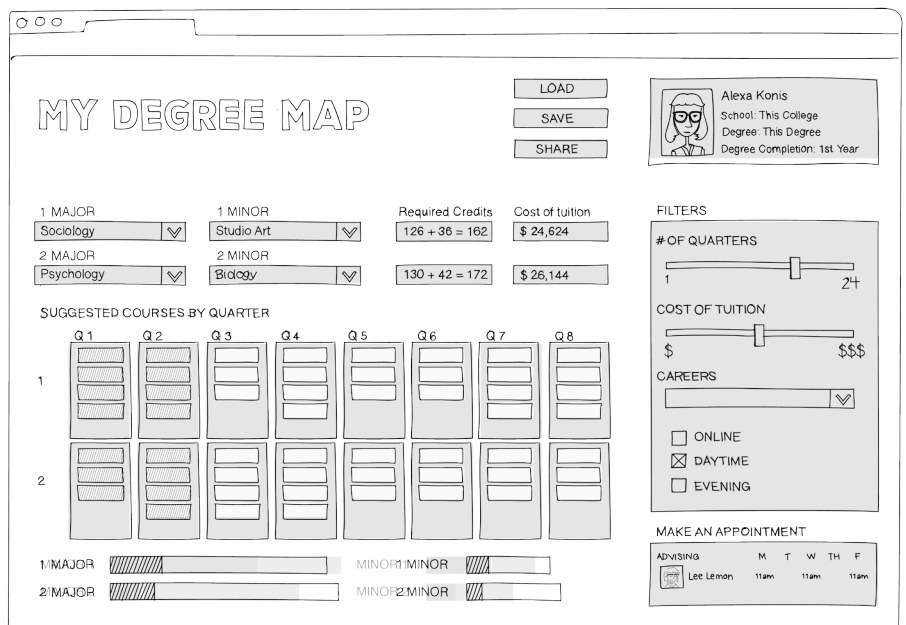
		space	service	communication	policy	program
	Create more connections between indoor and outdoor (spaces with lots of natural light and views / access to outdoors; outdoor seating for lounging and studying, ideally with access to power).					
	Support student-run events (e.g. simplify event/party planning process, create bookable event spaces) and increase school-run social events (complementing student-led activities with campus-wide events).					
	Increase off-campus programming and provide students time (e.g. access to Philadelphia, partner programming with tri-college consortium).					
	Support fluid transitions between activities by increasing variety and multi-functionality of spaces (including the creation of a makerspace).					
	Provide more, informal lounge spaces and increase utilization of existing lounges.					
	Support difficult conversations / create "call-in" culture (e.g. establish norms for conflict / disagreements).					
	Extend the lunch hour.					
	Provide a variety of healthy foods and food options to meet a broad range of needs.					
	Minimize ad hoc rescheduling of classes.					
	Provide more study seats (for both quiet and collaborative study).					
	Sponsor College-wide day-long event where students are encouraged to take a break and have fun.					
	Promote exploration of health and wellness, and art programs in class or extracurricular programs.					
	Organize outdoor events (e.g. "plant challenge", trail walks, tree plantings) possibly with an educational component including sustainability.					

ABOUT PROTOTYPING / PILOTING

PROTOTYPING / PILOTING

Prototypes are mock-ups of varying degrees of fidelity that can help test out new ideas (e.g., by getting feedback on a sketch). Pilots involve testing ideas through interactions with users (e.g., adding new furniture to a space and observing its use). These strategies can be applied to spaces, services, programs, policies, and communications – both physically and digitally.

The project team and community can engage in planning and implementing a series of prototypes and pilots to assess and refine the ideas resulting from the visioning study, giving the College a clearer sense of how the ideas will be enacted before making significant investments.



Portland State University created a wireframe of a student services dashboard to share with the campus community for feedback and to use as a fundraising tool.




Harvard University developed library services prototypes to test the concepts with students and get feedback.



NSCU mocked up a space with furniture and signs to test the configuration of their future service point.

HOW TO PROTOTYPE / PILOT

Planning prototype and pilot activities will allow participants to think through testing at a high level, considering the steps involved and what questions need to be answered for each step. Some ideas may be more appropriately assessed through prototypes than pilots (e.g., an outline for a digital signage communications plan), and vice versa (e.g., testing a lounge configuration of furniture in an existing space). The sequence of the steps and their associated questions are valuable reference to guide planning efforts.

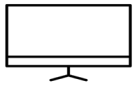
- 
- 1 Definition and Planning**
What is the goal of the prototype / pilot? What will it help us achieve? What will be tested? Who should participate?
 - 2 Gather Resources**
What spaces, tools, equipment and people are necessary?
 - 3 Prototype Internally / Launch Pilot**
How will testing work? What information / data can we build on? (If piloting, what actions are needed to launch the pilot?)
 - 4 Observe, Assess and Refine**
How will the space / service / program be monitored? How will success be measured? What's next?

NEXT STEPS

To support Swarthmore's upcoming work to expand on and refine the emerging strategies, the following pages suggest ways the concepts could be further developed. This format is intended to prompt discussion and offer a template for planning.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

Each page includes a description of what the concept could look like in the future with aspirational images that convey features of the solution.



Create digital signage featuring campus events, student clubs and student work.

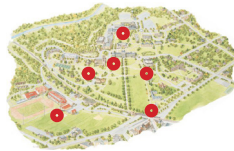
WHAT IT COULD BE

Digital signage could be placed in highly trafficked areas (e.g., lobbies) for high visibility, sharing interesting content as well as campus updates.

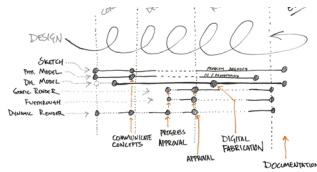


HOW TO TEST / PROTOTYPE

1. Identify locations for digital signage on campus.



2. Create a process for content management (how is content approved / developed?).



3. Pilot on a small scale and gather feedback to assess effectiveness before scaling up.

QUESTIONS / NOTES

- Use existing equipment when possible; if purchasing new, use existing vendors to purchase more of the same equipment
- How will content be created?

Ideas about how test / prototype the strategy are also included, with images to show how low-fidelity prototypes can be created quickly and easily. (See pages 32-33 for more on prototyping.)

Questions and Notes are included as considerations for planning activities.



Create digital signage featuring campus events, student clubs and student work.

WHAT IT COULD BE

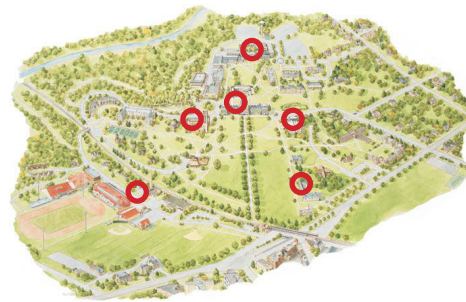
Digital signage could be placed in highly trafficked areas (e.g., lobbies) for high visibility, sharing interesting content as well as campus updates. Digital signage could also be placed in lounges and common spaces with information relevant to groups who frequent those spaces as well as details about campus-wide events.



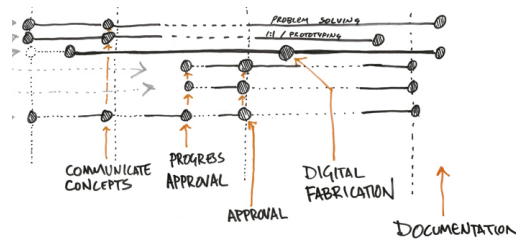
Images: (top) NCSU Hunt Library (bottom) University of Michigan, digital signage in student union

HOW TO TEST / PROTOTYPE

1. Identify locations for digital signage on campus.



2. Create a process for content management (how is content approved / developed?).



3. Pilot on a small scale and gather feedback to assess effectiveness before scaling up.

QUESTIONS / NOTES

- Use existing equipment when possible; if purchasing new, use existing vendors to purchase more of the same equipment
- How will content be created?
- What will the process be for submitting, vetting, uploading, and managing content?
- Will content vary by location? (Might some locations feature student work vs. highlight upcoming events?)



Address functional obsolescence of libraries (e.g. furnishings, types / variety of seating, lighting).

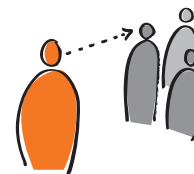
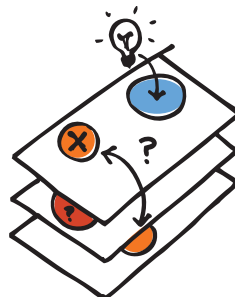
WHAT IT COULD BE

In addition to the need for more study space in McCabe Library, more types of study areas are needed, from quiet space for individual work, to collaborative, enclosed space for group work.



HOW TO TEST / PROTOTYPE

1. Consolidate stacks in the core of the building to maximize use of areas with natural light and views.
2. Hold a brainstorming session to develop new ideas for use of the space.
3. Observe and document use patterns to identify gaps and plan for additional changes.



4. Pilot on a small scale and gather feedback to assess effectiveness before scaling up.

QUESTIONS / NOTES

- Which ideas can be implemented in the library in the short term? Which will require longer term planning?
- Refer to Cornell Library main floor renovation as a precedent.
- Figure out what kinds of spaces to add: what's missing from the spaces that are currently available?

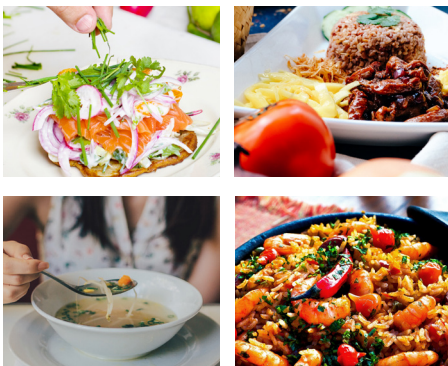
Images: (top) Princeton Julian Street Library (bottom) NCSU group study room



Address programmatic obsolescence of dining facility (e.g. servery at Sharples).

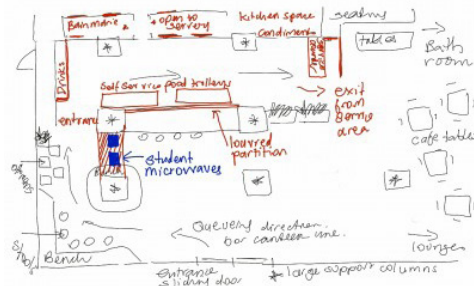
WHAT IT COULD BE

Swarthmore's dining venues could provide students with a greater variety of food options that are customizable to their preferences; the Sharples servery could be configured to improve access, decreasing students' wait time during the lunch rush.



HOW TO TEST / PROTOTYPE

1. Expand the lunch time window.
2. Generate configurations / service ideas to decompress the bottleneck in Sharples servery.



A rough sketch is a quick way to communicate an idea and get feedback

3. Gather feedback from students on interest in new food options (e.g., vegan, international)
4. Pilot on a small scale and gather feedback to assess effectiveness before scaling up.

QUESTIONS / NOTES

- Build on lessons learned from recent changes to meal plan / dining service ("grab-and-go").
- Consider questions of configuration and variety together when possible.
- What can be addressed at Sharples and what will be addressed elsewhere?
- What food options are desirable? (i.e. vegan, vegetarian, and international cuisines, locally sourced options, meals to go, and all-day breakfast)



Increase off-campus programming and provide students time (e.g. access to Philadelphia, partner programming with tri-college consortium).

WHAT IT COULD BE

Students could be engaged in planning and participating in off-campus activities that enrich and bring perspective to their work, and build on initiatives at Swarthmore. Student involvement in planning could be incentivized (e.g., a stipend) to make sure they have resources to develop successful programs.



HOW TO TEST / PROTOTYPE

1. Brainstorm ideas for off-campus programs.
2. Create prototype flyers to communicate the ideas developed.
3. Share with staff, faculty, and students to get feedback and gauge interest.



4. Develop a way to incentivize students to plan new, successful programs (e.g., a stipend).
5. Pilot on a small scale and gather feedback to assess effectiveness before scaling up.

QUESTIONS / NOTES

- What kinds of programs will advance the vision or build on other initiatives at Swarthmore?
- How frequently should off-campus programs be offered?
- What are other colleges in our peer group or region doing?
- What can be learned from successful off-campus programs? How were they planned?

Images: (top) Swarthmore Students at solar-powered Serenity House in Philadelphia (bottom) Swat Deck



Provide more informal lounge spaces and increase utilization of existing lounges.

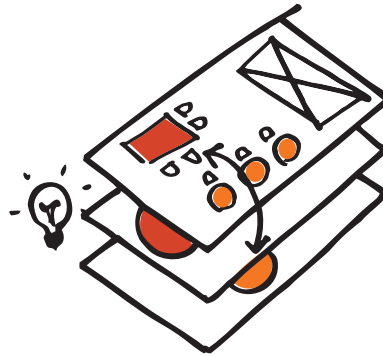
WHAT IT COULD BE

Lounges could be more adaptable to a variety of activities, with flexible and comfortable furniture. Students could be better aware of the kinds of activities that take place in lounges (planned social programs or informal, unplanned use) and when they happen.



HOW TO TEST / PROTOTYPE

1. Host a workshop with students to plan ideal configurations / furniture for piloting.



2. Partner with student groups to plan an event in a lounge space (and consider ways to incentivize student planning).
3. Pilot on a small scale and gather feedback to assess effectiveness before scaling up.

QUESTIONS / NOTES

- Use existing spaces / furniture as much as possible to test success of configuration (e.g., arrange furniture in Upper Tarble as a "pop-up" lounge).
- Consider testing programs in addition to furniture configurations as ways to increase use of underutilized spaces.

Images: (top) Syracuse University, College of Visual and Performing Arts student lounge
(bottom) Pacifica Graduate Institute

