Student Spaces and Deferred Maintenance

Expires: April 30, 2028

1. Facts

1. The landscape of student spaces and the projected enrolment growth on campus will change significantly over the next decade.
    i. The University plans to grow student enrolment drastically, reaching 60,000 students by 2030.[1]
    ii. The University of Alberta has found its per-capita square meter space to be 59% above the U15 average, making it the highest among U15 schools. [2]
    iii. The University of Alberta's 2021-2022 Space Optimization Strategy (SOS) has targeted a 15% reduction in the institutions physical footprint.[3]
2. Space planning on campus will impact students experiences.
    i. Students and student groups require quality spaces on campus to succeed in pursuing their academic and extra-curricular goal.
    ii. Students require space available to them that works with their diverse schedules.
    iii. Some students demographics seek spaces designed intentionally for their communities, such as dedicated Indigenous gathering spaces or dedicated prayer spaces, among others. These spaces are often not prioritized by the University.[4][5]
3. Students require space that is accessible and that affords the same choices to any user.
    a. Many spaces on campus are currently inaccessible to students.
        - The University often incompletely retrofits inaccessible spaces, resulting in spaces that do not meet the needs accessibility needs of all students.[6]
            - Retrofit designs are defined as designs that attempt to address issues of accommodation and accessibility but are temporary or incomplete fixes. [7]
        - There is a lack of awareness of disability on campus.[8]
        - Student-focused public spaces often have significant accessibility barriers. In a nine-factor UASU review of 13 student spaces around North Campus, the average accessibility score was 2.3 out of 5, down from 2.9 in 2019.
    b. Spaces on campus should be developed under principles of universal design
        - “Universal design affords any user the same choice while in the built environment.” Therefore, spaces no longer need to be built for specific groups, but but spaces are instead designed in a way that any user could access them.[9]
4. Many spaces at the University of Alberta were built before a change in building codes and thus currently remain physically inaccesible to many students.
    i. The University is often hesitant and limited in addressing these spaces because the newer, more inclusive code requirements would take effect if these spaces were modified, and therefore many spaces would have to be overhauled completely to meet modern requirements.[10]
5. Although the University has increased investment in gender neutral washrooms[11], there are still buildings on campus without accessible gender neutral washrooms.[12]
6. The University’s standard for building cleanliness has recently declined, dropping to level 4 on the APPA scale, which is considered “moderate dinginess.”[13]
7. Deferred maintenance is defined as an amount needed but not yet expended for repairs, restoration, or rehabilitation of an asset.[14]
    i. Funding for routine building and systems preventive maintenance has been significantly cut back, resulting in a substantial backlog of deferred maintenance.
    ii. The accumulation of significant deferred maintenance liability represents a failure of the government to adequately fund the operations of the University.
    iii. Deferred maintenance reduces the quality of the undergraduate learning experience, the University’s public image, and presents a potential health and safety hazard.

iv. Deferred maintenance issues with access points, walkways and floors, lighting, and many other aspects of the built environment disproportionately affect people with disabilities.

2. Resolutions

1. The Students' Union will advocate that the University of Alberta space allocation and development take into consideration the needs of students and student groups both present and future.
    i. The Students' Union will advocate that student spaces repairs match the rate of deterioration.
    ii. The Students' Union will advocate for better maintenance of current student spaces.
    iii. The Students' Union will advocate for the improval of cleanliness quality on campus, and;
    iv. The Students' Union will advocate that student space development follows the principle of carbon neutrality.
    v. The Students Union will advocate that the University ensures student spaces to accommodate for student enrolment growth.
2. The Students' Union will advocate for the construction and renovation of classroom spaces such that they reflect advances in effective pedagogy.
3. The Students' Union will advocate that student spaces are open and available sufficient hours such that they address student needs.
    i. In spaces where building hours are reduced to address security concerns, the University of Alberta Students' Union will advocate for student OneCard access outside of standard hours.
4. The Students' Union will advocate for spaces that account for the need for universally designed spaces, such that they can be accessed by all students:
    i. Whilst recognizing that universally designed spaces may not account for all needs, thus further advocacy may be required;
    ii. Whilst avoiding retrofit designs, and;
    iii. Regardless of differences in accessibility needs.
5. The Students' Union will advocate for extensive and sufficient consultation with students prior to developing new making changes to student spaces on campus.
    i. The Students' Union will work towards ensuring that students will be responsible for the lowest possible cost for space development, renewal, and maintenance.
6. The Students' Union will continue to provide students with space to pursue their academic and extracurricular goals.
    i. The Students' Union will work towards a better awareness of the current spaces available for students.
7. The University of Alberta Students' Union will advocate to the University of Alberta for the remediation of the accumulated deferred maintenance liability.
8. The University of Alberta Students' Union will highlight ongoing deferred maintenance liabilities at the University of Alberta to all appropriate levels of government and advocate for adequate institutional funding.
9. When advocating for development and repairs, the University of Alberta Students' Union will:
    i. Highlight factors relating to student well-being;
    ii. Work towards a more accessible campus;
    iii. Prioritize social, economic, and environmentally sustainable practices;
    iv. Push for construction practices that minimize future maintenance costs and prioritize preventative maintenance;
    v. Prioritize spaces with the greatest need, or that would otherwise receive less funding and care, and;
        i. Spaces that are often not prioritized by the University include but are not limited to dedicated prayer spaces, gender neutral washrooms, Indigenous gathering spaces, Augustana Campus, and Campus Saint-Jean.
    vi. Prioritize cost friendly options, without sacrificing any of the aforementioned principles.
10. The Student's Union shall advocate to the University of Alberta to prioritize student spaces, for teaching spaces, learning spaces, and spaces that directly enhance the student experience, when dealing with deferred maintenance funding. Relevant spaces include but are not limited to:

i. Physical recreation facilities;
ii. Student lounges;
iii. Libraries;
iv. Residences;
v. Classrooms and lecture halls;
vi. Laboratories and research facilities.

3. Citations

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