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Undergraduate



Undergraduate Research Journal



The Importance of (Accessible/Private) Office Space

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THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

The Importance of (Accessible/Private) Office Space

Introduction

The University of California Merced is planning on relocating some instructors off campus to the Starbucks/Promenade Center to hold office hours. In doing so, UC Merced is hoping to solve issues it currently has regarding space. Students of the UC believe that moving office hours off campus would create multiple inconveniences including, but not limited to transportation, privacy, and safety issues. The purpose of this research is to find whether or not moving office hours off campus will benefit students.

The paper will go into depth on how moving the office space will affect the students' academic performance. It will discuss how transportation, safety, and privacy will affect students academically.

The Issues

The University of California, Merced is a Hispanic-Serving Institution which is defined as "an institution of higher education that—(A) is an eligible institution; and (B) has an enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent students that is at least 25 percent Hispanic students at the end of the award year immediately preceding the date of application," according to the Department of Education. About sixty-one percent of their students are low-income and about

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

seventy-one percent of their students are first-generation students, according to “Who Our Students Are,” a UC Merced webpage that gives statistics on its students background. For many, attending college is a difficult process; when you factor in immigration status, socioeconomic status, and the possibility of being a first-generation student, the difficulty greatly increases. Students may feel overwhelmed if one or more of these categories apply to them, making it critical for the school to provide necessary accessible resources. One such accessible resource that UC Merced already provides is on campus office hours.

A instructor's office hours are crucial for a student's learning and academic success. Office hours allow for students to discuss grades, get clarification on assignments, or discuss personal matters with their instructor. It allows for students to get to know their instructors in a more intimate setting. In the article “Engaging in Office Hours: A Study of Student-Faculty Interaction and Academic Performance” by Mario Guerrero and Alisha Beth Rod, they conducted a study where they compared the frequency of a student attending office hours to their course grades. They found that “for every visit to office hours, a 0.722% increase in a student's course grade [occurred]” (411). We can draw multiple conclusions from this study, the first being that attending office hours has a positive impact on a student's grade. It is our belief that this is because it allows for the students to ask the instructor questions they may have, garner direct feedback from their instructor, and the opportunity to understand

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

what the instructor expects allowing them to approach current and future assignments confidently.

Office hours need to be conveniently placed and where better than on campus. Students need to have office hours on campus as it would be convenient for them to walk to the office and make a quick stop in between their classes. Having office hours off campus would force students to plan a trip. The traveling time can take away from a student's time and energy from studying, attending classes, or even getting a necessary amount of rest, and eating regularly. Removing the current ease of access to office hours will discourage a student from attending office hours, affecting the student's learning and academic success. If a student cannot go off campus, then they will not have valuable conversations with their instructor about their grades or about personal issues that might be affecting the way they are performing in class. This will hurt a student's grades and might even result in them dropping out.

These new locations for office hours have another issue; they will be set up as an open floor space. In the article "Why Your Open Office Workspace Doesn't Work" by David Burkus, he explains that "research is showing that the benefits of open office design for collaboration are typically offset by myriad distractions and possibly even health concerns" (1). Although there are some benefits of an open floor plan, there are a great number of disadvantages that outweigh them. The noise of another conversation, or any other event that may

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

cause a scene, can only serve to disrupt or cause frustration during student-instructor communication. Another issue that Burkus touched upon was that research showed “a lack of sound privacy received the most negative responses from employees in open offices” (1). Sound privacy is one of the main issues that people are encountering in open offices. There is a severe privacy issue when it comes to personal conversations in an open office environment. So, we can deduce that it will not allow for instructors and students to discuss anything confidential like grades or family matters in private. These distractions and lack of privacy in open floor offices can lead to the student having unproductive office hours with their instructor. These disadvantages can also lead to a student no longer being willing to attend office hours because of their negative experience, therefore, affecting that student’s learning and academic success.

From these privacy issues, there may come a violation of a student’s right to discuss grades privately. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) states that schools “must have written permission from the parent or eligible student in order to release any information from a student’s education record.” A move to an open floor plan runs the risk of having faculty and staff discuss a student’s grades out in the open for anyone to overhear. A student should be able to feel safe and comfortable when discussing grades or anything that they might want to bring up to their instructor. Beyond FERPA

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

requirements, UC Merced has its own “Special ‘Don’ts’ for Faculty” list that states faculty must not “discuss student progress with anyone other than the student without the student’s consent (this includes the student’s parents and spouse).” With the open floor plan, it will be close to impossible to discuss grades or confidential matters with a student in private. Family, DACA, LGBTQ+, and other sensitive issues are sometimes brought up during office hours, making it even more inappropriate for a bystander to be within earshot.

Addressing Counter Arguments

There are some who opposed our stance of holding office hours on campus. Some views included but were not limited to “they will not be off campus for long,” “there is not enough space on campus,” “there is a bus route that would go directly to the area where office hours would be held,” “what about virtual office hours,” and “that Starbucks/Promenade Center is a safe location.” While many of these seem to be valid arguments, there are many main points and factors that have been left out.

“They will not be off campus for long”

While space is an issue, stating that the instructor would not be moved off campus for long seems like a misstatement. Who is to say that if it happened once before it will not happen again? The director of the Merritt Writing Program stated, “I am not going to make any promises about how long we will be

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

assigned to this space.” If the director of the Merritt Writing Program felt uncertain about how long the instructors would have their space, then it is clear that their spaces are not permanent and they can be replaced at any time.

“There is a bus route that would go directly to the area where office hours would be held”

Although this is true, the frequency in which the CatTracks bus passes by the Starbucks/Promenade Center is not enough to satisfy the volume of students that would have to use the bus after office hours is relocated. It is also important to point out that, according to the survey that was conducted, the bus is also not nearly on time enough for it to be 100% reliable.

“What about virtual office hours?”

While virtual office hours seems like a viable alternative, they are not a secure way to have office hours. On campus, the school internet tends to disconnect every once and a while. If that were to happen while a student was conversing with their instructor then it would not benefit them. There is also the problem of privacy, students do not usually have privacy in their dorms since they share it with others and everywhere else on campus there is always at least one person. This means the students would have to rent out a private room to have their office hours online. If that happens it would just be better to book a

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

room where the student can converse with their instructor in person.

“The Starbucks/Promenade Center is a safe location”

Although many felt that at this current point in time, the Starbucks/Promenade Center is a safe location, the future of the area may not be the same. Moving office hours to this location would bring more people which can make the small area become congested and hazardous to pedestrians. This also does not take into account those who own cars and would like to attend office hours. The limited amount of parking can lead to frustration and a greater drop in the amount of people who attend office hours.

Methods

Survey

A survey was created to give us insight on how UC Merced students feel about off campus office hours. The survey also asked questions on the safety of the Starbucks/Promenade Center and how students would feel about in open floor plan environment that may become the office lay out in the Promenade Center and on campus. The survey mainly targeted freshmen, however, all UCM students were welcomed to share their opinion by taking the survey. The survey was created through Qualtrics and distributed electronically by a link sent through text and email. It was also distributed through Snapchat, QR codes, Facebook, and verbally communicated to people around campus.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

Petition

One of the ways we wanted to show that there was real support behind our fight for office hours to remain on campus was a petition. A petition would show that there is support for the cause and it puts tangible names in front of the school. We used several tactics to get the petition out to people but our main ally in this was social media.

Interviews

The purpose of the interview was to see how the change of location of instructor's offices would possibly affect DACA students, so on April 20th, 2018, we spoke one-on-one to someone who works within the Bright Success Center. We asked questions regarding the safety of our Undocumented Bobcats off campus, and other challenges they could face as a result of being moved off campus. Names were changed or omitted due to safety concerns.

Transportation

Research was conducted on the forms of transportation the school provides. The forms of transportation found on campus are bus routes. What we did was scout the best possible bus routes to take to get to the promenade. Once we found that, we timed how long it would take to get from campus to the Promenade. We got on the bus by Muir Pass Road and started the timer. We ended the timer when we arrived at the Promenade stop. This process was

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

repeated for all the bus routes that take students from campus to the promenade. Then we narrowed it down from all the bus routes to the most efficient and convenient.

The second transportation method we tested was by vehicle, timing how long it would take to get to the Promenade from campus by car. This is important since it would allow us to see how long it would take a student with a car to get to the Starbucks/Promenade Center.

Findings

Survey

What is your class standing?

One of the important pieces of information that we asked was their class standing. Our main survey target was freshmen, due to them living on campus and having a difficulty traveling off campus. However, the survey was distributed to all students in order to gain opinions, especially from upperclassmen. It was important to distinguish those surveyed because freshman have a different perspective than the upperclassman. Freshmen are new to college and may have a different expectation of what colleges should and should not do. Whereas, upperclassmen are more experienced and they may have informed opinions. The results show that the majority of survey takers, 74.48%, were Freshmen, achieving our goal.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

How do you self-identify?

Majority of the participants, 44.24%, identified as Mexican American/ Chicano. Although small in percentage, there are respondents who belong to other underrepresented communities, such as, Puerto Rican and African American. This question was needed since every identity is important, and crucial in examining how much minorities use these resources.

What is your current gender identity?

This question helps us understand how the safety issues affected different genders. We wanted to know who felt safe at The Promenade and to get each gender's perspective about the issue. Majority of respondents were women, which shows how they are affected more than men due to unsafe areas.

Do you identify as part of any of the following groups?

We asked participants what their background was to relate it to their feeling of safety at the Promenade. If the students identify with a minority group it would help explain why they might not feel completely safe in the town. Some of these groups often face issues due to race, one issue being that they may be first-generation students. Our results reveal that a majority of participants, 40.76%, identify as first-generation students. Since most of our respondents also identified as a minority, this links to our observation that many are first-generation students.



THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

Do you live on campus?

We asked students who lived on campus their opinion about having to travel off campus. This would let us know if students believed that traveling would be an inconvenience to them. The results reveal that the vast majority of the students live on campus.

Do you believe that office hours are an important part of your education?

By asking this, we are able to observe students' thoughts of office hours. This allows us to know what percentage of students prefer to attend. Majority of students responded that they do enjoy and attend office hours.

If you have made use of office hours, what did you use them for?

This question enables us to understand what type of information students talk about when they attend office hours. This allows us to know whether or not an open floor plan would be beneficial to students. Since there are rules regarding privacy (issues) that the university must follow, FERPA. Because a lot of the students go to discuss grades and work on assignments, we believe that having an open floor plan will not be beneficial to students since it will violate the FERPA privacy regulation surrounding grades.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

How often do you go to office hours?

This question provides insight about off campus being an issue to students. If students do not attend, then there should not be a problem. However, if students do attend, then traveling off campus will not benefit them since they might stop going due to certain issues such as transportation, safety, or even privacy.

How difficult is it to attend office hours?

We are able to know if students are not attending due to reasons of inability from this question. The results show that most students find it difficult to attend office hours before the move. Students already find it difficult to attend office hours, a resource that is considered very helpful to students. A move off campus would only increase this sense of difficulty for them.

If difficult, why?

This question confirms that students have problems with class schedules. This issue will be expanded upon further in our "Transportation" Section later on.

How do you feel about online office hours?

Essentially, this would let us know if students were willing to attend. Our results display that most like the idea. We assume respondents may like the idea because they have not been in the situation where online office hours were

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

offered. Online office hours are not widely held, if at all, at UC Merced. This could mean that respondents did not have enough of an informed opinion on online office hours along with any pros and cons as well.

Would you prefer if your instructor's office was on campus or off campus?

The main purpose of this survey is to get direct feedback from students on their preference of office hours location. The results revealed that a majority (86.23%) of participants prefer to have office hours on campus. These data are helpful to our research because it shows that many students do not want office hours to move off campus.

What form of transportation do you mainly use?

We asked participants to provide their mode of transportation, whether it is CatTracks versus a car or The Bus. Students were allowed to choose from three options; the first two being "Bus" and "Car" as these are the main forms of transportation to campus. The "Other" option was necessary since there are students who use other ways to get to campus, such as by bike. By doing this, we learned that most students use CatTracks. Thus, it can be assumed that this would be the main form of transportation to the Promenade if office hours are moved to that location. This leads to issues such as, overcrowded buses, students left behind, and tardiness to meetings.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

How often do you go off campus?

This question was asked to see how often students with a car went off campus compared to students that travel on the bus. This question was important to ask, as it would show us how often students aren't on campus, how busy they may be, and how this would work in with the bus schedule. Using it as a follow up question, asking for their main use of transportation allows us to understand the limits of different types of transportation, such as, the bus versus a car.

How often do you use your main choice of transportation?

We wanted to know if it will get crowded on busses or in parking lots. Our answers concluded that a few people use their method of transportation every day. This figure could be explained from the number of people who live off campus and are required to commute every day. There are also some students that use CatTracks often. Therefore, office hours off campus would increase the use of the bus system, which may cause overcrowding. For example, these issues already arise on buses, such as C1, C2, and occasionally Heritage and FastCat. This is also asked to identify how many students could be busy throughout the day due to using their transportation very often.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

If your main form of transportation is CatTracks, is CatTracks...

We asked if bus routes were on time to know if they are a reliable source to get from campus to The Promenade. It is clear that busses are, for the most part, on time. This means that it should be a reliable form of transportation for students. However, there may be some times where the busses are late, delaying students for events planned on campus such as, classes, group meeting, etc. The rate of which the bus is tardy needs to be minimized. Although, about 50% say it is on time and 3.73% say it is always on time; there is still a great amount of students that claim the bus is usually tardy or rarely on time. If office hours will be held off campus, then the bus system needs to be regulated better to ensure that students do not come late to any meetings, classes, etc.

If your main form of transportation is a car... (check all that apply)

Those who own cars are at an advantage to those who have to use the bus because they do not have to wait an extra time. This already puts the freshmen, our main concern, at a disadvantage since they are not allowed to have cars (except under emergency circumstances). This is important to distinguish because those who ride the bus would be most affected by the change, particularly the freshman.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

If you live OFF campus, how would you feel about traveling to the Starbucks/Promenade Center to attend office hours?

Asking how off campus students feel about having to travel to the promenade allowed us to see if it were an inconvenience. Those who answered N/A can be due to the large number of on campus students. If we exclude the N/A responses, we observe that the majority of students believe it would be an inconvenience to travel from one place to the other. This means that some will not attend office hours because it is highly inconvenient, which will hurt those academically.

If you live ON campus, how would you feel about traveling to the Starbucks/Promenade Center to attend office hours?

We asked on campus residents if they feel that off campus office hours would be an inconvenience, further questioning if it would affect their attendance to office hours. 50% said off campus office hours is an inconvenience and would minimize the amount of times they attend. This is geared towards those living on campus since they are more affected than those living off campus. Also, the 23.88% that stated N/A could be those who lived off campus.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

Do you feel that the Starbucks/Promenade Center is safe?

Ensuring the safety of all students and teachers is the main concern. It appears that 66.41% of participants do feel that the location is safe. Although this data contradicts our claim that The Promenade is not a safe space, it still helps to know that many students feel this emotion. The data reflects the student's current feelings of the safeness of The Promenade, not their feelings on its future safeness. One student said, "all of Merced seems sketchy." Another student said, "Merced locals are wild!" These two responses can be linked together to conclude that there is an obvious perception of the people in the Merced created by the students. Students might not feel safe because "locals" make them uncomfortable or because of stories heard about Merced, which leads them to believe that Merced locals are "wild." We can conclude that some students may not feel safe or comfortable around the people in Merced.

In an open floor plan, large, open spaces are utilized rather than private, enclosed rooms. Will having office hours in an open floor plan be distracting and/or uncomfortable when discussing grades, assignments, and/or personal information with an instructor?

First, we stated what an open floor plan is. After, we asked if discussing with an instructor in an open floor plan would be uncomfortable. This gives us insight into what students think about being in this environment. It is important to

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

ask this question because it supports the research conducted on open floor plans. Our results show that most people do not like the idea of having an open area. That may be because they know that FERPA is there to keep all their educational records private. Some students even believe that having an open area would decrease the amount of times attending office hours. This alone would not benefit them academically and can significantly affect their learning capabilities, i.e. talking to instructors during office hours (this is one of the most important resources to students).

Can you tell about a time where office hours had a significant impact on your learning or success?

This figured out how people are benefiting from office hours, enabling us to prove that office hours do have a significant impact on student learning. A significant impact would mean it is a valuable resource, one that should be easily accessible on campus. The results show that a majority of students received help on homework, studying for exams, and understanding their grade on a quiz or in the class. The participants seem to have truly benefited from office hours. For example, one student made a bold claim, "Office hours is why I'm passing physics." Other students stated that their grade has even improved because they went to office hours. Another example is a student received an A on a quiz due to attending office hours. It is clear that office hours has a highly

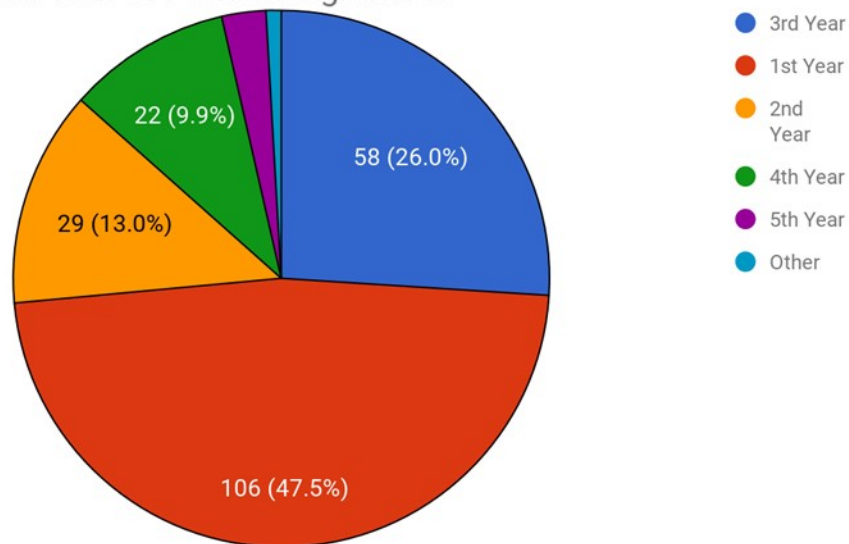
THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

positive impact on student success at UC Merced. These are evident to why office hours should be kept on campus.

Petition

Within a day of putting the petition on our social media, we received about 120 responses. The rest of the responses have mainly been through word of mouth. In total, we received 223 signatures. Below is a chart showing what year the signers are, further putting on display the range of students who support our argument. Majority are first years, which shows how important they believe office hours should be on campus. (The 5th year category received six signatures and the other category which consisted of TA's, instructors, or admin received two signatures):

Educational Year of Petition Signatures



THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

Interview

When dealing with students, their safety should be the university's top priority. We wanted to focus on a group of individuals who may already fear for their safety in Merced such as DACA students. To find out more about this group of students we wanted to interview someone who works closely with DACA students, since they make up about 7% of the UCM student body, the largest number of undocumented students of any UC. We were told by our interviewee that our Undocumented Bobcats already have fears being on campus. Our interviewee would prefer to be quoted anonymously, and will further on be referred by a pseudonym, Charlie. Our first question to Charlie was, what their main concern was for Undocumented Bobcats. Charlie said the "...lack of safety they have on campus..." was their main concern. Charlie mentioned that due to the current social climate, less and less Undocumented Bobcats have been showing up to events meant for them. They feel that they can't go, especially with "what happened with the CR club, with their tabling, students have felt more uncomfortable with coming out to our events." Students are beginning to not feel safe on their own campus, where they should feel the safest. Charlie mentioned a shocking story where a student came to them and told him "...her mom told her not to come into our space, because just national news, current politics, she- her mom feared that our space could be shot up, and so that was disheartening to hear, that's not what our space is supposed to

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

be.”

How would this fear translate to off-campus? Well, we asked. “I think it’s you’re getting to a more conservative space, and students aren’t[sic], don’t feel as welcome,” Charlie shared, “...and you also hear things about local businesses supporting like campus republicans, or local businesses supporting ... the NRA, or local businesses supporting very conservative organizations and when you see that or know that, you also get a sense of their beliefs on immigration, and how they could possibly feel about you as a human being. So I know that’s [sic], I would say it gets even more unsafe when you’re off campus.” Our Undocumented Bobcats already worry about groups on campus that may be against them, but now they would have to worry that those in town may also be against them.

Considering the current political climate and the recent raids in Northern California, the question of possible raids by ICE, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, was discussed. We also asked the question if the Promenade was a safe space for our Undocumented Bobcats; Charlie responded that it wasn’t clear to them who was going to be situated there. When asked, Charlie said that the Promenade does not have the same protections as the campus, but that could depend on staffing. Seeing as instructors seem to be the only staff that will be there currently, Charlie said, “I think that what’s in their purview is

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

very specific to classes, and that would be a concern too." Many of these instructors may not know what steps to take when it comes to our Undocumented Bobcats, which may lead to a student being detained, unable to return home, or unable attend to their studies.

When Charlie was asked of the potential of an Undocumented Bobcat being detained in between bus stops, Charlie was adamant that it wouldn't happen, "but at the same time you never know... we can say this is what they're supposed to do and this is what we expect them to do, but what's to say they follow that."

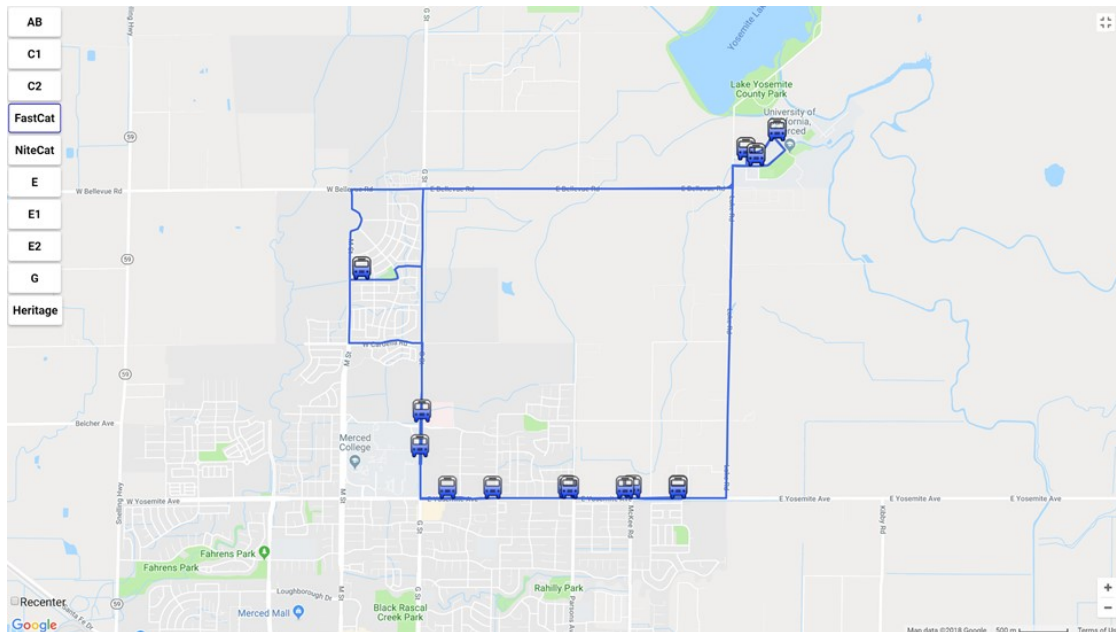
Transportation

Moving office hours off campus will bring a rise to multiple issues; one of those being transportation. Thankfully, UC Merced offers transportation throughout the city. From the campus, students are able to take the school busses (CatTracks) or rent a car (ZipCars). There are also other forms of transportation that the school does not provide, such as Uber. However, our findings show that these alternative forms of transportation are not beneficial to students.

Bus routes are one of the main forms of transportation at UC Merced. Students are allowed to ride the bus by only showing their cat card to the bus driver. There are two potential and beneficial busses that students can take to go to the promenade. This limits the times that students are able to travel to the

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

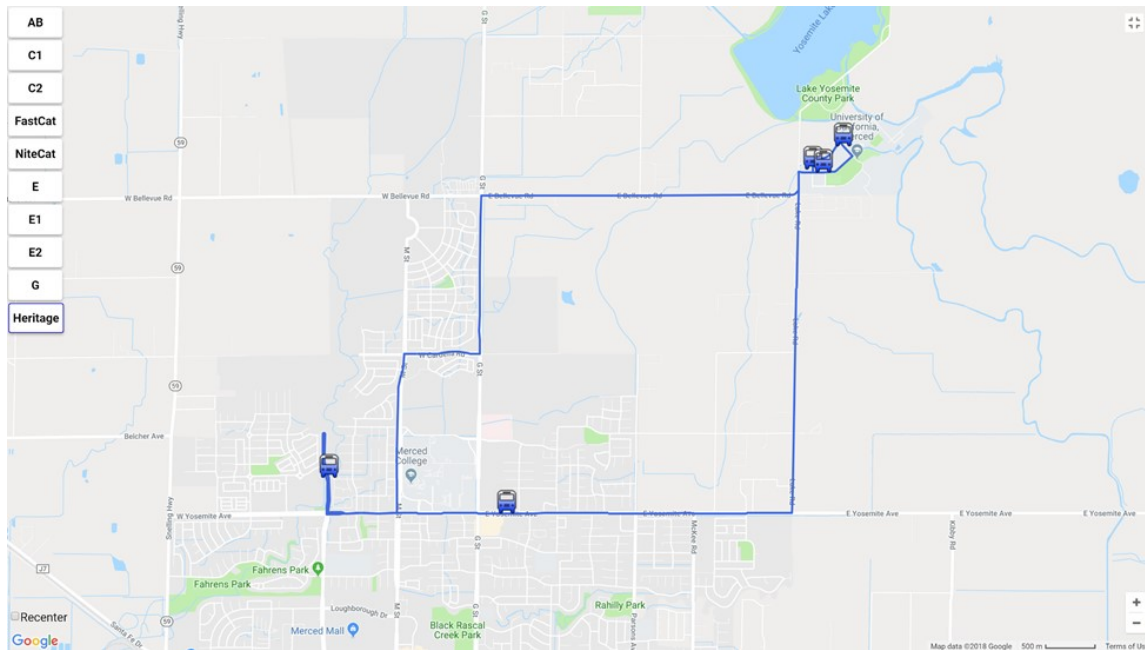
Promenade, for many reasons. Most of these busses that travel to the Promenade tend to travel from the school to apartment areas, or other off campus housing areas. The bus routes that students can take are the Fastcat and the Heritage busses. There are two more buses, however, those bus routes take longer to arrive to the school from the Promenade.



Our findings show that the best bus to take would be the Fastcat. As you can see in the image above, it has a lot of stops, more than Heritage. However, it is the fastest bus to arrive at the Promenade. This bus typically takes around fifteen minutes to arrive at the Promenade and about twenty-three minutes to get back to campus. The bus is usually on schedule; there have been times that the bus has been late. The times that the bus have been delayed ranged from twenty minutes to an entire bus cycle, meaning they are stationed for an hour or more. Additionally, the Fastcat bus goes straight to off campus student

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

apartments. This results in the bus always being full, limiting the amount of students that can get onto the bus. The Heritage bus is similar to this one.



The image above demonstrates that the Heritage bus does not arrive at the Promenade, this one instead will drop students off about three blocks away from the location of the cross streets Yosemite and Cordova. Even though this bus route only has two stops off campus, it still takes more time to arrive at the Promenade than the Fastcat does. The heritage bus takes twenty-three minutes to arrive at the InShape stop then from there, the students would need to walk around three blocks to the Promenade which takes about eight minutes. Then to get back to campus on the Heritage bus, students would need to walk back to the bus stop at the InShape. This bus takes fourteen minutes to get back to campus. The Heritage bus is also on time, for the most part. There have been



THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

times that the bus has been delayed fifteen minutes to one hour. Moreover, the busses can often get full; for example, the Fastcat, bus goes to student apartments, and at certain times will be filled to capacity. This leaves limited space for students to get on this bus.

Even though the busses are helpful to get to the Promenade, students do not benefit from it. Most students have classes back to back, leaving them with an hour or less of a break in between. In this time most students go to office hours, in hopes to receive help from instructors. If the office hours were moved off campus to the Promenade, then taking busses would not benefit anyone. Students would not be able to travel from campus and the Promenade with enough time to make it back to class. The shortest route would be taking the Fastcat, meaning students would have to have about forty minutes just for traveling between campus and the Promenade. Then students have to account for the time that they would be spending with their instructors in office hours. We can say that students spend at least thirty minutes speaking with instructors. Meaning that students would need at least an hour and ten minutes to attend office hours off campus. Most students do not have this time.



THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

Freshman Residents

Incoming freshmen Housing residents are **not** eligible for parking. However, a limited number of spaces have been allotted to accommodate freshman residents who require frequent access to a vehicle. You may apply for a "Spring H" Housing permit if you meet one of the exception criteria. Residents will be parking at Merced College, there will be no on campus parking for the fall semester. Purchasing a kiosk permit does not authorize on campus parking during enforcement hours.

Click on the permit "Type" to view parking locations on the campus map.

Type	Description	Date Available	Validity Dates	Cost
SPRING H	Residents (parking at the Merced College lot)	12/7/17	1/15/18-5/11/18	\$160.00

There are alternatives to the transportation that some students may have, allowing them to go off campus if needed, such as privately owned bicycles, ride-sharing apps, and even car rentals from ZipCar. Some students may own a car, which is the best option for reaching the Promenade. From what we found, on average, it takes eight minutes to drive to the Promenade through the path down Lake Rd. However, the price for owning a car is not cheap. The image above shows that if you are a freshman you will not be allowed to purchase an on-campus parking permit. However, you are allowed to purchase a parking permit for Merced Community college, and to get a parking permit you need to have certain qualifications. Students either need to have an off-campus job, medical condition, or provide care for a family member etc. Parking permits for freshmen are one hundred and sixty dollars, which is the same price as a permit on campus. This does not seem fair as the student does not even have their

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

vehicle on campus and it would limit the amount of time they can meet with their instructors for office hours at the Promenade.

The UC has another form of transportation that they "provide" for students. The school has a partnership with the car rental service known as ZipCar. What the university does is it allows students to register for this system at a discount. Students are able to register with a fee of fifteen dollars a year instead of paying the normal twenty-five dollars a year. After the yearly fee, students are charged for every hour they rent the vehicle. These prices can vary from seven dollars an hour to nine dollars an hour, depending on the type of car you rent out.

The ZipCars do sound like a great option for students to use. However, when you take into account that most students come to the University of California, Merced on financial aid then you can assume that most student will not have enough money to spend on the ZipCars. This then leaves students with the only other option of taking busses. Another problem with the ZipCars is that they are limited. There are only about six ZipCars on campus, which is not enough to accommodate for all the students trying to go off campus. Even though transportation is a big issue with this, it is not the only issue that will arise from off campus office hours.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

Open Floor Plan

One problem students face when it comes to the move to the Promenade space is the fact that it is currently an open floor plan. In an article called, "Surprising Office Politics at UCSF Mission Bay" by Michael Meranze, he talks about how there was a large outcry when UCSF moved almost 800 staff and faculty members to an outside office. Meranze reports that a large portion of this outcry was due to the fact that an open floor plan was to be used for these new offices. An open floor plan is designed to increase sociability, which for certain environments, such as a newsroom which has a certain necessity for sociability could work very well, but not in the case of UCSF (Meranze). Even if the school has office hours on campus, and just had the offices of the people working there, it could decrease their productivity, and as UCM is a research institution that could affect research depending on who is sent to the Promenade space.

UCSF's problems are different than UCM's for a couple of reasons, but there are also many similarities. The primary similarity being that the UCSF was using this space partially for medical offices which means that there a lack of privacy when discussing sensitive patient information. UCM is not using the Promenade space as medical offices, but privacy remains a relevant issue. In an open floor plan, there is very little access to privacy and many faculty and staff

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

at UCSF felt that this was essential, one faculty member even said this:

After taking the virtual tour, it is hard for me to imagine a less conducive work environment. While we do thrive on collaborations and interactions with our peers, so much of the work that academic faculty performs requires a quiet and private space where focused writing and thinking can occur. Reading, reviewing, and writing grants and manuscripts, as well as a relatively quiet space to meet with a student, trainee, or colleague one on one for sensitive conversations is critical (Meranze).

This was one out of fifty, single-spaced, pages of comments relating to this floor plan and building itself. The open floor plan is not only negative as it has some positive effects, for example, collaboration is certainly increased, but it was found that the increased distractions hampered any work getting done.

Another factor to consider is FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) and how student rights must be protected.

FERPA is a law that helps protect students from a number of things. One of the ways that FERPA protects students is the prevention of disclosing private student information. An example of this would be if a grade sheet was left out or if a laptop was left open, this violates FERPA and the student's rights. Normally, it would not be a problem for an instructor to take the necessary precautions to be sure that everything is not out, but their job becomes significantly more

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

difficult when they are placed in an open floor plan. This type of floor plan is not conducive to ensuring that FERPA laws are followed, and this alone should be enough to cause hesitation on the idea of implementing an open floor plan.

In the article, "Why Your Open Office Workspace Doesn't Work" by David Burkus in Forbes Magazine, he talks about a massive study done by Jungsoo Kim and Richard de Dear where they selected small data sets based on office building categories, which was still 42,764 observations, and classified them into one of five categories (Burkus). These categories ranged from enclosed-private offices to open offices then compared satisfaction levels across these different categories. Burkus goes on to say, "Unsurprisingly, they found that enclosed private offices had the overall highest satisfaction rate and that open floor office plans had the lowest." It seems satisfaction should be a huge priority for UCM, as without instructors there would be no one to teach and little research being done. Another piece of critical information was found in this research once they used regression to see how important each dimension was to overall satisfaction. They found that there was a strong desire for more collaboration among employees, but those who worked in an open floor plan found it may not have been worth all the stress and distraction from a large amount of noise (Burkus). Noise seems to be a huge factor when it comes to productivity and satisfaction in the workplace and an open floor plan is the worst plan when it comes to reducing the noise level. The stress of a loud work environment should

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

not be a stress that UCM's staff and faculty should have to suffer through, the facts are here that an open floor plan is a terrible idea for a multitude of reasons.

List of Recommendations

If the University moves instructor's office hours off campus, it will be an inconvenience for students and instructors. We understand that it may take up to the year 2020 to meet this demand, however, we believe there can still be temporary solutions to the issues involving transportation, privacy, and safety.

- The transportation issue at hand involves having a small number of buses for the growing number of students on campus. The buses can get overcrowded sometimes to the point where there are no available spaces and the people in line for the bus have to wait for the next one. A possible solution to this problem is to increase the number of buses and bus routes. One bus should take students to and from the Promenade back to campus so that those who need to attend office hours there are not being held back because of the overcrowding on the bus.
- Since freshmen are the newest students on campus, they will be the most affected by this move because they are new to using buses here, go out of their way to pick up their vehicles every day from Merced

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

- College. For this reason, freshmen that receive approval to have a car should be allowed to park on campus. Or, if a student that has a car has a class that requires them to go off campus for office hours, then they should be allowed to park their car on campus.
- An open floor plan is a privacy concern for students, instructors, and the university. If instructors have a student that needs immediate attention concerning personal or academic success, it may be difficult to discuss these things privately in an open floor plan situation because there will be other people in the same room who can overhear these conversations. To solve this privacy issue, there should be two to three private rooms at the Promenade that instructors have immediate access to in case a student goes to a instructor with private information that they do not want anyone to overhear. These rooms should have a booking system that allows a instructor to book a room ahead of time without having to ask the student to wait or meet another day, but a potential backlogging problem would need to be addressed.
- It has been said that there will be a "hotel" space on the main campus for instructors whose offices are located at The Promenade. These instructors will have to sign up to use this space and will have a



THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

- schedule, but many instructors sharing one hotel space will limit their availability on campus. If a student schedules an appointment the instructor might have trouble finding a time for space in the shared hotel space which has already limited them to a couple hours a week. This may solve some privacy and travel concerns, however, one room for ten or more instructors is not enough considering instructors have at least one hundred students each. If hotel spaces are going to be a temporary solution until the 2020 project is done, then there should be three to five offices to allow instructors to hold more office hours throughout the week. They should be allowed at least 4 hours a week and at least two days out of the week.
- The last and most important issue with the Promenade is safety, especially concerning the students that identify as DACA students. The Promenade should be a designated sanctuary space like the main campus. These students might fear being targeted off campus by those who may have opposing political views. To relieve this fear, instructors and staff at the Promenade space should be required to undergo UndocuAly Training to help them support DACA students who need to travel to the Promenade space.

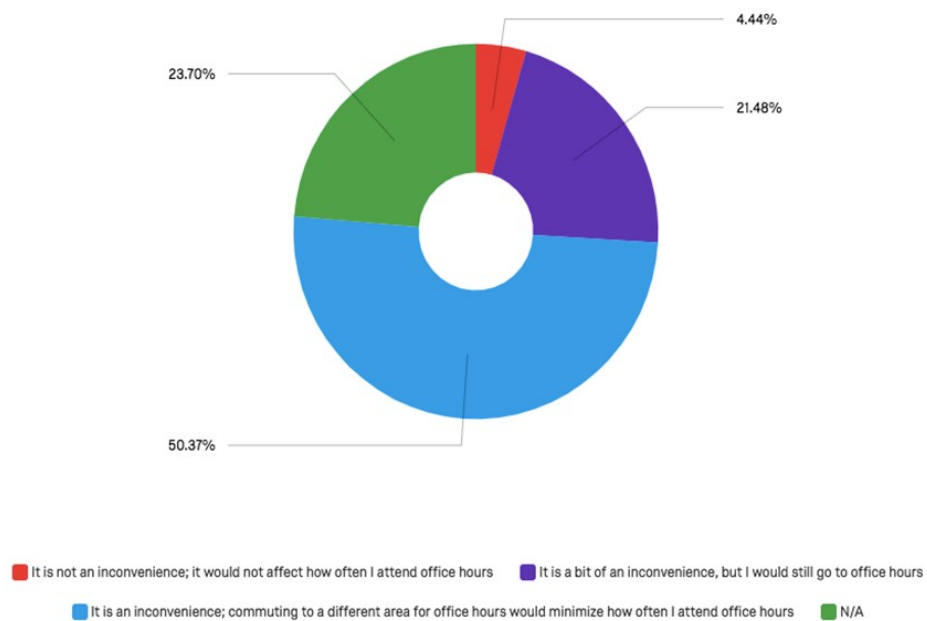
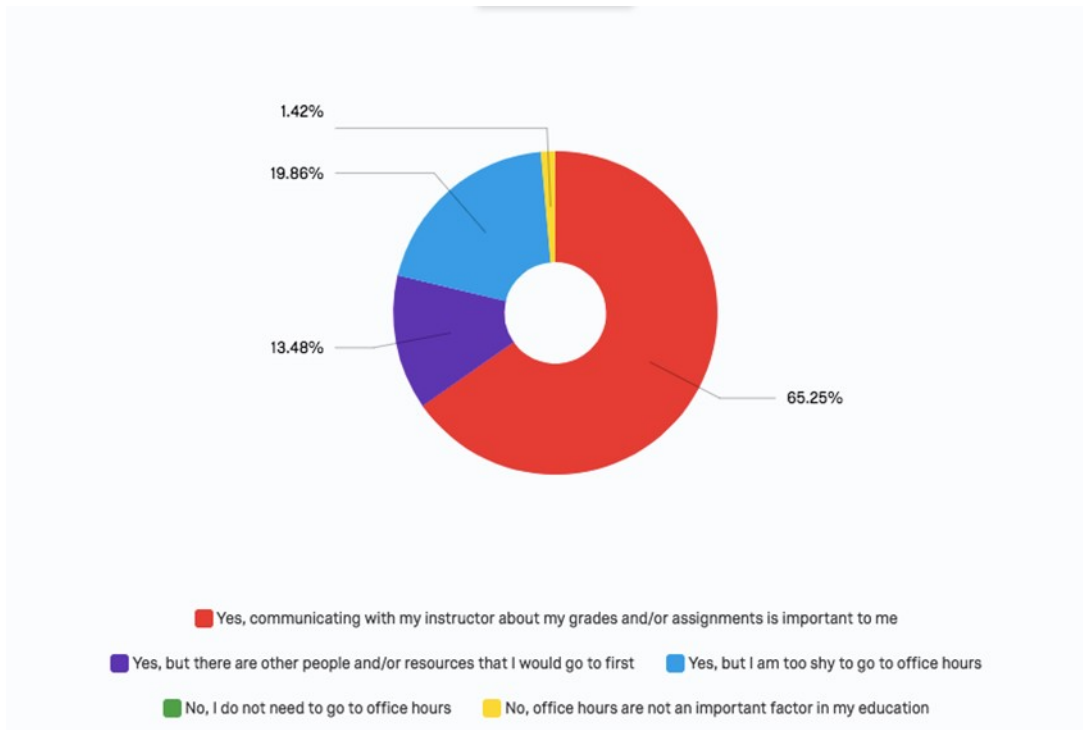


THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

Conclusion

Accessibility to office hours is important to a student's learning and academic ability, and our students think so too. Through our polling, around 65% of students find office hours are important to their education, but 50% of students find it somewhat difficult to attend office hours. 50% also said that office hours being off campus would minimize their time attending office hours. Office hours need to be on campus and easily accessible to ensure student learning and academic achievement.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE



THE IMPORTANCE OF OFFICE SPACE

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