

Hub Central: Utilising co-created 'space design' to produce peer interaction across diverse student groups

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Abstract

Planning interaction between students needs to start as part of the space design. The University of Adelaide opened 'Hub Central' in September 2011. A 42 million dollar project co-created with students has seen an area of 10,500 square metres that has built its own unique community that embraces diverse interaction.

Staff working with international students have been socially engineering opportunities or creating 'programs' that aim to foster interaction between diverse groups for years. Experience shows that these programs often support interaction between a diverse range of international students but are not so successful in promoting interaction between international and domestic students. A new approach has been used at Hub Central. Students were used in the co-creation of a space that has been designed to promote academic achievement by enhancing the student experience. By reflecting on their own needs, roles and contributions, a space has been delivered that is multifunctional, allows repurposing and fosters students developing their own approaches to interaction. A space largely with a philosophy of self management by students and filled with staff that are student centric has resulted in a community with an overall heightened sense of awareness and empathy towards the goals of their peers.

Hub Central is the complete package as a student space. The Hub includes 11 bookable student project rooms, 13 student projects booths, 290 fixed student computers, training rooms, Wi-Fi, a student kitchen, 3 commercial food outlets, a general store, the Maths and Writing Centres and Student and IT Support Services operating extended hours (8am to 10pm weekdays, 10am to 5pm weekends). The collocation of all this has provided a greater feeling of belonging and encouraged the students to interact in diverse groups beyond the classroom.

The paper aims to provide real world examples of how 'space' can be designed and utilised for enhancing student support services and interaction between all students, staff and community.

Keywords Interaction, Learning Commons, Learning Space.