

GROUP LEARNING EXERCISE

**For the 10:30 a.m. session of the IPAL Conference
at Morningside College, Sioux City**

10 March 2006

At a baccalaureate college enrolling 1,700 students, library staff, information technologists, and student services staff concerned with tutoring have presented the chief academic officer with the following preliminary ideas for a Learning Commons to be created in the college library.

- Library staff wish to reframe their reference services by offering them in the Learning Commons. They wish particularly to act on their information literacy goals of helping students to recognize when information is needed and to locate, evaluate, and use the needed information effectively.
 - Library staff believe they can advance their information literacy goals by working in close association with information technologists and student services staff responsible for writing and other tutoring programs.
 - A library staff member and/or a student assistant will be available in the Learning Commons at all hours the library is open
 - Library staff will require space to confer with readers, a ready reference collection, and two workstations in the Learning Commons.
- Information technologists wish to offer support for students and faculty who are using technology in any aspect of their academic work, giving particular attention to more advanced applications software and to the intelligent use of instructional technology.
 - Information technologists are primarily concerned with helping students and faculty to make informed choices about the use of technology and helping them to resolve problems with hardware and software.
 - An information technologist and/or one or two student assistants will be available in the Learning Commons at all hours the library is open.
 - Information technologists need space to confer with clients; this space should be equipped with workstations similar to those available elsewhere in the Learning Commons.
- Student services tutoring staff wish to assist students master general writing, speaking, and computational skills.
 - Tutoring staff see their partnership with library staff and information technologists as an opportunity to establishing a non-remedial context for their work.
 - Two tutoring staff and four student assistants will be available in the Learning Commons from 1:00 to 10:00 p.m.
 - Tutoring staff need spaces to work individually with students and seminar space for small groups of students. These instructional spaces should have white boards, computers, and projection capabilities.
- The Learning Commons should provide:
 - 25 workstations offering networked computers equipped with standard office software and specialized software for computation, statistics, managing images, geographic data, sound, etc.
 - projection capabilities available to those using the Learning Commons
 - an electronic classroom equipped for 20 students and an instructor.

The chief academic officer particularly welcomes collaboration among these academic support staff, who must learn to meld three different professional cultures if the Learning Commons is to succeed. In responding to the staff's preliminary ideas, the chief academic officer wants first to explore the following six questions, which conceptually owe much to the NSSE benchmarks of effective educational practice:

1. What is it about the learning that will happen in this space that compels us to build a bricks and mortar learning space, rather than rely on a virtual one?
2. How might this space be designed to encourage students to spend more time studying and working more productively?
3. For what position on the spectrum from isolated study to collaborative study should this learning space be designed?
4. How will claims to authority over knowledge be managed by the design of this space? What will this space affirm about the nature of knowledge?
5. Should this space be designed to encourage student/teacher exchanges outside of the classroom?
6. How might this space enrich education experiences?

Those attending the IPAL Conference will sort into six groups, each group to consider one of these questions, which come from a draft paper, "First Questions", by conference speaker Scott Bennett. The paper is available at <http://www.libraryspaceplanning.com> under the "Current Projects" tab. A summary of the key issues involved in each question will be provided to the members of each group.