Objectives

B&D developed an electronic survey to quantitatively test the demand for a variety of auxiliary and athletic spaces that could be provided at Montana State University Billings. The survey was designed to identify, in a statistically reliable manner, existing and projected usage patterns, and sensitivity to specific facility and service improvements. Data collected through the survey also forms the basis for future recommendations posed by B&D.

Methodology

Survey questions were designed to assess demographic profiles, perception of the facilities’ quality, and overall support for a possible referendum vote. Data collected could also be sorted by various demographic characteristics to identify differences in opinions and the likelihood of support among various sub-populations.

All active Spring 2010 students were asked to participate in the online survey via an email invitation from the President’s and Student Government offices. These 734 students were able to participate in the survey from February 2nd through February 16th, 2010. Graduate and undergraduate students initiated 934 surveys, and in total, 739 completed surveys were collected. A copy of the student survey instrument with response frequencies can be found in Exhibit X.

Survey Demographics

In total, 15% of the student population participated in the electronic survey, of which 79% completed the survey. Assuming a campus population of 4,851 (headcount based on information provided by the University), the 739 completed responses established a +/- 3.6% margin of error at a 95% confidence level.
Overall, the survey sample demographics were fairly consistent with the overall university student demographics. Although slight skewing in the survey samples is common, the survey data is acceptable due to B&D’s methodology for determining demand through the isolation of demographic sub-groups in order to determine their response for any single question.

In general, there was a 14% underrepresentation of returning freshman who participated in the survey. Female students were slightly over represented the sample at 68%; part time students were underrepresented in the survey at 20%; and students from the College of Technology were more than 11% underrepresented in the survey.

Main campus survey participants corresponded to over 67% of the students who took the survey with another 20% and 13% coming from the College of Technology and Online Classes, respectively. Furthermore, 43% of students who participated in the survey were considered to be non-traditional. The distinction of a non-traditional student is as follows:

- Works full time while enrolled.
- Considered to be financially independent for the purposes of financial aid eligibility
- Contains dependents other than a spouse, which are often times children
- Has delayed enrollment to a postsecondary institution
- Does not have a H.S. diploma or completed a GED certificate program
- Attends classes on a part time basis for part of the academic year
More than 94% of COT survey participants and 71% of Main Campus participants revealed that they commute to campus alone by vehicle. With an additional average of 32% of students commuting within 10 miles from campus and another 13% traveling from within 10 – 20 miles, MSUB has successfully created a reputation of being a close and affordable commuter school where students all across Yellowstone County may obtain a great education. Fifteen percent of survey respondents also indicated that they live on campus in the residence halls or family housing.

Q. 217 How do you typically get to class/campus? (All respondents, n=651)
Summary of Findings

Both the students and Montana State University – Billings administration recognize the importance of auxiliary and athletic spaces for the support of quality of life, stress mitigation, mental health, and academic success. As a result, a majority of respondents felt that the improvements to MSUB’s Student Union Building, Athletics, Recreation Center, Housing, Health Services and Child Care were of high priority or neutral priority for the University.

Student Union Building

When respondents were asked how often they use the Student Union Building (SUB) or COT Commons (Commons), survey data revealed that students from the COT use the Commons more frequently during the week than Main Campus students use the SUB. Students from the COT also use the Commons for a greater period of time per visit than that of their Main Campus counterparts. More specifically, a total of 59% of COT respondents indicated that they use the Commons either 2 to 4 times per week or 5 or more times per week. In contrast, a total of 59% of Main Campus students either used it occasionally / several times per semester or never.
In general, Main Campus students enjoyed using the SUB to shop at the bookstore (34%), eat (26%), and socialize/meet friends (10%). Similarly, COT students shared that they use the Commons to study (48%), eat (26%), and socialize/meet friends (12%). A peak emerged in the usage of both buildings between the hours of 11 AM to 1 PM, which is typically when students stopped before or after class for food and to socialize. Distinct usage patterns among respondents from both campuses are clearly indicative of the cultural and demographic differences between those attending the COT and Main Campus.

When participants were asked to rate how high a priority it is to make improvements to the SUB and Commons, a slight majority of both campuses felt neutral about making alterations (55% of Main Campus students, 51% of COT students). However, more COT students than Main Campus students felt it was of very high or high priority to make improvements to union spaces.

Of those who selected a priority of low and very low, respondents felt that the improvements are unnecessary because current facilities are satisfactory to meet current and near-term needs and because students do not want fees to be increased.

When those who took the survey were asked to rate their perception of the student unions when compared to other universities they are familiar with, 42% of Main Campus students and 41% of COT students agree that MSUB has satisfactory facilities. Additionally, twenty-three percent of both Main Campus and COT students believed the facilities were currently in very good or excellent condition. Popular student unions at other universities that MSUB students were familiar with included: MSU Bozeman, UM Missoula, Rocky Mountain College, and Montana Tech.
Largely, if improvements were to be made, survey respondents cumulatively determined that they would use the SUB or COT Commons more often if the following were included:

- More study areas
- Additional availability of parking near building
- Lower cost of services and activities
- Awareness of programs and activities
- Improved quality/variety of the Food Service
As indicated by the chart, prioritization of improvements still differs substantially between both campuses and should therefore be addressed accordingly.

Q. 6 Please select the following improvements that might increase your usage of the Student Union Building or COT Commons: SELECT ALL THAT APPLY
(All respondents, n=803)

- More study areas
- Additional availability of parking near building
- Lower cost of services and activities
- Awareness of programs and activities
- Improved quality/variety of the Food Service
- Improved quality of, and access to, technology
- Friends using facility
- Variety and quality of services and activities
- Location more central to the campus
- Appearance/atmosphere of building
- Increased building hours of operation
- More space
- Commuter lockers
- Other (please specify)
- Club organization space
- Larger meeting rooms

Athletics

As Montana State University – Billings becomes increasingly more competitive in the Great Northwest American Conference, adequate facilities for student-athletes and a more attractive venue that draws in student spectators was requested by survey and focus group participants.

- When all students in the survey were asked to share whether or not they participate in MSUB athletic functions, 59% indicated they never attend athletic events or games.
- The remaining students said they attend MSUB athletic events occasionally (26%), once a week (8%), 2 – 4 times per week (6%), or 5 times per week (1%).
Men's Basketball (29%), Women's Basketball (20%), Women's Volleyball (11%), Men's Soccer (8%), and Baseball (8%) were the five most-attended sports at MSUB by all survey participants. Similarly, respondents had the opportunity to decide what sporting events they would attend more often if MSUB expanded the number of competitive sports on campus. The five competitive sports students chose most often are as follows:

- Football (23%)
- Ice hockey (10%)
- Swimming/diving (9%)
- Bowling (8%)
- Rifle shooting (8%)

Students in the survey who did not attend games shared that the main reasons were: I do not have time to attend games (33%), none of the athletic teams appeal to me (17%), and my friends do not attend the games (12%). Respondents were also asked: "If MSU Billings improved its athletic facilities and game day experience to your desires how long of a drive would you be willing to make from campus to attend an athletic game?", with 46% of all students indicating 0 to 15 minutes, 33% for 16 to 30 minutes, and 11% saying 31 to 45 minutes. Similarly, when they were asked to determine what would make them attend more MSU Billings athletic events the top five responses included:

- Greater school spirit (23%), more advertising of when events are (21%), increased parking nearby (13%), discounted family days (12%), and improved seating (10%).
The needs for student-athletes were also gauged in this survey to determine what factors and amenities were important for their success. In total, 58 student-athletes (8% of all survey respondents) answered questions from the survey regarding the auxiliaries and athletics master plan. The track & field team represented the highest population in this portion of the survey at 28% of all student-athlete participants. Baseball (15%) and cross country (10%) student-athletes were second and third, respectively.

Overall, student-athletes displayed a common concern in the survey and focus groups that reveal current facilities, amenities, and programming are not up to the standard they expected as an athlete. Many participants also expressed that their competitors had better facilities. Athletes felt the five most important improvements that should be made to athletic facilities in order to make them a better student-athlete included:

- Improved practice facilities (23%)
- Dedicated weight and fitness room (17%)
- Improved training facilities (16%)
- Dedicated locker rooms (8%)
- Increased student attendance at home games (8%)
Campus Recreation

Throughout both of the focus groups and survey, it was evident that students placed a moderate priority in their physical well-being through recreational and fitness activities. Most of the emphasis was placed in off-campus usage with 77% of COT students and 81% of Main Campus students indicating they engage in activities for at least some portion of their week. In contrast, only 31% of COT students and 54% of Main Campus students shared that they utilize the on-campus fitness center at some point during the week. Of those who do not participate in recreational / fitness activities, 67% said they do not have time to exercise, 56% indicated “Other”, and 17% said they do not like to exercise. The “Other” responses included: facilities are too far away, they are pregnant, or students are unsure of where the recreation center is located.
67% of all students specified that they do not own an off-campus gym membership. Other participants elaborated further mentioning that they jog, perform martial arts or play various outdoor recreational sports off campus. Non-traditional students expressed a lack of time to pursue any fitness or recreational pursuits on campus due to a variety of obligations at home and their place of employment.
As survey data continued to reveal a significant lack in usage of the campus fitness center by students, participants stressed that the current facilities needed improvements in order for them to utilize more frequently. With over 54% of COT students and 54% of Main Campus students, participants in the survey placed the improvements to the recreation sports facilities at high and very high, respectively. Only 9% of COT students and 8% of Main Campus students felt improvements were of low or very low priority for MSUB. Of those who felt improving the recreation sports facilities were of low and very low priority, their most common reasons were: MSUB had more pressing priorities, did not want fees to increase, and did not use the fitness center.

![Graph showing priority levels for recreation sports facilities improvements]

**Q. 78 Improvements to recreation sports facilities should be:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority Level</th>
<th>COT (%)</th>
<th>Main Campus (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very high priority for MSU Billings</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High priority for MSU Billings</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral priority for MSU Billings</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low priority for MSU Billings</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very low priority for MSU Billings</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Housing**

MSUB has become a very popular choice by students due to the proximity of its campus within the Billings area and has also gained a reputation for being a commuter school for those who travel within Yellowstone County for an above-average education.

- Almost half of survey participants at Montana State University – Billings indicated that they commute (49% of all students) from a permanent address in the greater Billings area and another 19% who commute from an apartment/rental within a three to five mile radius of campus.
- The majority of MSUB survey respondents who commute from a permanent address in the greater Billings area are from the COT campus (60%).
- Lastly, only 16% of all MSUB students in this survey revealed that they live in Petro or Rimrock Halls.
Participants were asked to share who they currently live with, 58% of COT students and 35% of Main Campus students indicated that they live with a spouse/partner and/or children. Thirty percent of Main Campus students and 15% of COT students said they live with their parent(s) or other relative(s), whereas only 12% of both campuses mentioned that they live alone.
To get a better understanding of how much students were paying to live off campus, the survey asked participants what their share of monthly rent/housing costs are in a typical month.

- Main Campus students showed spikes at less than $100 (18%), $300 to $399 (18%), and $200 to $299 (13%).
- COT Campus students showed a slight variation toward more expensive rent/housing costs with spikes at $200 to $299 (13%), $400 to $499 (13%), and $500 to $599 (13%).
- Additionally, 52% of COT participants and 42% of Main Campus participants mentioned that they do not share the cost of rent with anyone else and spend an average of $100 or more on utility costs (69% of COT students, 46% of Main Campus students).
- The most common leasing structure for students renting off campus was month-to-month (51% - COT, 48% - Main Campus) and 12 months (24% of COT students, 21% of Main Campus students).

Students made it evident that improvements should be made to the housing on the MSUB campus. Students were asked to determine the importance of particular factors as the University seeks to make changes to the residence halls and residential life programs, students from both campuses similarly felt that the top three should be: keep room affordable, safe/secure environment, and meal plan options. Likewise, students were asked to determine the five most important features for MSUB to take into consideration during the possible new housing construction or renovation and came up with: affordable housing rates, private bathroom, wireless access, kitchen, and single bedroom.
Health Services

Currently, 13% of MSUB students access their health care coverage through the University. When the remaining students were asked to share how they access their health insurance coverage, responses from all participants included the following: through parents (35%), through work (19%), other (18%), and a private policy (14%).

To better understand the existing usage patterns of the Student Health Center, the survey determined how often and for what duration of time respondents visited in the past.

- Firstly, it was found that the majority of COT (68%) and Main Campus students (60%) do not use the Student Health Center at all.
- Secondly, a student’s typical visit to the Student Health Center consisted of a ½ hour or less (22% - Main Campus, 15% - COT).
- An additional group of respondents from the COT and Main Campus said they use it on a pass through only basis at 12% and 8%, respectively.
Students demonstrated an interest in making changes to the Student Health Center through renovations or expansion projects. Fifty-five percent of students on the Main Campus and 59% of COT participants agreed that this project should be considered of high or very high priority by the University in order to meet the health care needs of its students.

In the survey, respondents also had the opportunity to indicate which types of spaces and services they would enjoy having at the Student Health Center. The three most common space additions that students requested include: massage therapy, dentistry, and pharmacy. In contrast, when particular services were measured against desired times of usage, the most heavily requested choices came from the times of 8AM to 12PM and 1PM to 4PM for immunization services, primary care, and dentistry, respectively.
**Child Care**

When respondents were asked in the survey to identify whether or not they currently use some form of child care, an overwhelming majority of students from the Main Campus (91%), COT (74%), Downtown (100%), and Online (78%) said no. Further, a small amount of respondents (1%) said they use the child care provided by the University. The three most common reasons for not using the child care provided by MSUB included: the inconvenience of its current Main Campus location for COT students, the inconvenience for student's academic schedule, and because of the program being full during the time they attempted to sign up their children for child care.

**Q. 198 Do you currently use some form of child care?**

*(All respondents, n=739)*

- **No**: 86%, 91%, 100%, 78%
- **Yes, family or friends take care of my child/children**: 1%, 1%, 0%, 1%
- **Yes, I use a child care provider in the Billings area**: 74%, 0%, 0%, 1%
- **Yes, I use the campus Child Care & Enrichment Center**: 0%, 0%, 0%, 1%
Survey respondents stressed the importance to accommodate to nontraditional students with children because of the difficulty in completing academic programs in a timely fashion. Difficulties in attaining affordable and convenient child care in the Billings area were of greatest concern by students in focus groups and the survey.

When students from both campuses were asked what days they required child care as well as what hours were most convenient, Tuesdays for less than 2 hours / drop-in care was the most popular scenario. Other popular scenarios for child care are services for approximately 4 to 8 hours on Monday and Wednesday. There is a notable spike for students from both campuses on Saturday for 8 or more hours of child care, likely due to greater studying opportunities and weekend classes.
In conclusion, although all respondents did feel that having child care on the MSUB campus would be of greater preference to parents (66%), students still did not feel that it was of very high or high priority (7%) for the University to make improvements in the near future. Instead, a total of 71% of all students felt it was of very low or low priority to improve the child care facilities. Of those who chose a priority of low or very low, the most common responses to not make improvements to the child care facilities were: “if students want better facilities, then they can explore off-campus opportunities” and “I do not want fees increased.”