

AUXILIARY SERVICES: CATALYST FOR INSTITUTIONAL REBRANDING

The College of Coastal Georgia's Campus Center brings new life

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"The food is fresh and delicious. The atmosphere is bright, light and vibrant... This is an exciting place to be!"

- Valerie Hepburn, Ph.d.

As existing institutions rebrand and transform themselves, the campus services and amenities provided by auxiliary services are critical. The availability and quality of dining options, attractive housing, and bookstore and retail operations managed and developed by auxiliary services provide an institution with the necessary tools for recruitment and student satisfaction in today's highly competitive environment.

Founded in 1964, the Coastal Georgia Community College (CGCC), a two-year, associates-degree granting and post-secondary technical training institution, became a vital component of the regional community. Fueled by economic growth in the state and the region, and responding to the community's demand for a local, four-year, accredited college, the Georgia Board of Regents joined by campus and community leaders began the work to transform the local community college into a complete, residential institution. Dr. Valerie A. Hepburn, Ph.D., was appointed as the institution's fourth president, and led the transformation of the 193-acre campus to The College of Coastal Georgia (CCGA), the first SACA accredited, Level II "state college" institution in the region. The college now offers baccalaureate programs in education, business and health sciences.

As a community college, there were few outlets and little demand for auxiliary services on campus. This was about to change.

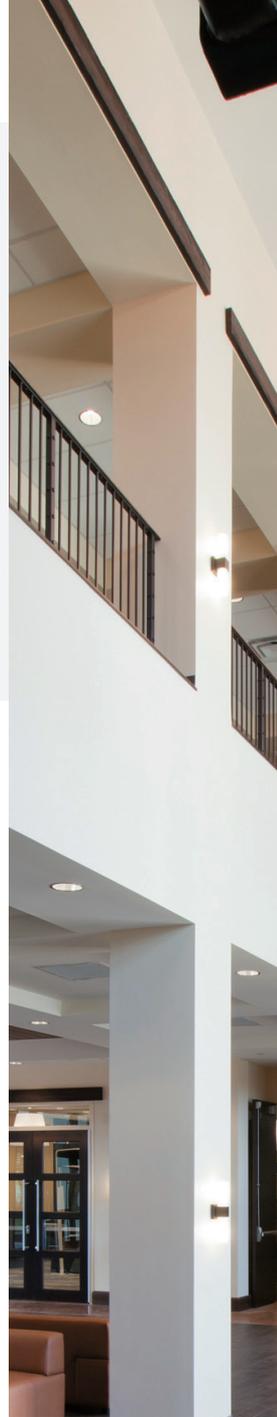
EXISTING AUXILIARY SERVICES ROLE BEFORE THE "REBRANDING"

Coastal Georgia Community College operated a very small auxiliary services department prior to the rebranding effort. CGCC did not have a

traditional food service component or contract and the bookstore was operated by the college. Vending was the only component that was outsourced and required contract management on campus. Essentially the Bookstore Operations Manager had the dual role of Director of Auxiliary Services. In 2009, at the start of the rebranding effort, auxiliary services became a formalized organizational structure that quickly took a leadership role in obtaining operators for both campus housing and operations in the new Campus Center.

MASTER PLAN

Through Hepburn's leadership, the college undertook a master planning effort to address the space needed to accommodate the academic transformation and the rebranding effort required to establish the college as a desired destination for students and faculty. Perkins Eastman, in association



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with Eva Klein Associates, assisted the College of Coastal Georgia with the development of their strategic and comprehensive master plans.

The Master Plan Steering Committee, comprised of the President, staff, students, and community members undertook a seven-month process, developing the strategic objectives and institutional mission; space and special facility's needs; physical campus development scenarios; architectural and landscape vocabulary; as well as the pragmatic issue of physical and operating costs, financing sources, and project sequencing.

During the master plan effort, goals for enrollment and physical growth were based on targeted growth and needs. Having relocated students enrolled in vocational and technical degree programs to a nearby technical institution at the initiation of the transformation, the first priority was to return the college's enrollment to 3,000 students by 2010. The 10-year growth plan forecast campus needs to accommodate further growth to 6,000 students by 2020. To facilitate that growth, the college implemented a plan to execute an on-campus residential program, providing for the construction of housing and a Campus Center to assist in the recruitment and retention of students.

The strategic and master plans identified the need to transform and rebrand the campus to facilitate growth. The austere building designs of the 1960s would be replaced by a modern, interpretive Spanish Mission-style architecture, a regional vernacular characteristic, featuring red clay roofs and stucco walls. The brutal landscape would be reorganized and redesigned to provide a lush environment again, reminiscent of the local community. Additionally, student services and programs would have to be redesigned as well.

ROLE OF AUXILIARY SERVICES DURING THE DESIGN PROCESS

To accelerate the rebranding, Hepburn suggested a "one-stop" shop for students that would merge multiple needs—a place that would provide a seamless social, recreational and study continuum—to concentrate activity in a

central center for campus life. With 2020 growth projections establishing the need, the College Steering Committee, auxiliary services, and the design team set about to program, plan and design a new Campus Center on the central campus quad, in close proximity to the proposed new student residences at Lakeside Village. This 50,000-square-foot gateway building, conceived in the rebranded campus' modern, Spanish Mission-style, was designed to "fuse" student and campus services, combining food service, bookstore, theater, social and study space, business services, and other student-focused functions.

The Campus Center's interiors extend the Spanish Mission-style exterior into the welcoming and comfortable lobby, the new gathering space for students and prospective students. The furniture and interior finishes fit within the aesthetic standards established during the master plan process. The student lounge is a mix of high and low seating that suggests a retail lounge-type approach to the modern student community space. The furniture is bold, comfortable, durable, contemporary and modular. The combination of space design and furniture selection allows for the singular student or the interaction and collaboration of larger groups.

DINING SERVICES

The key to establishing a residential campus community is the creation of a viable and desirable campus food program. As a community college, the on-campus food service tradition was limited to grab and

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go of cold food, prepared off-campus. There was no perceived value or convenience to dining on campus. Students consciously made the effort to travel to local retail food chains for meal breaks.

With no existing on-campus dining program, CCGA Auxiliary Services staff actively participated with the design team in the early programming and space needs assessment for the new Campus Center food service facility. Immediately, auxiliary staff began the RFP process to hire a contract food service operator. This critical element to the institution's re-branding was programmed to immediately serve a population of 3,000 students and staff, including 600 campus residents.

The colleges' auxiliary services group was simultaneously engaged in the process of hiring the program's operator while playing an integral part in defining the goals and the "look" of the future food service program within the Campus Center. Visits to nearby campuses, student surveys, financial analysis and staff input were instrumental steps in this process to determine the criteria for the program and for the operator. Utilizing commuter and prospective student input, concepts were developed for mandatory declining-balance residential meal plans and for the types of food service to be provided.

The College of Coastal Georgia had a vision and a very short timeline to implement it. The project design schedule demanded that the operator selection process, from issuance of the RFP to selection, be completed in less than four months. A critical component in the design process was the determination of the best model for food delivery and funding. After much discussion, it was decided that the facility would be an "all you care to eat" environment and that a declining balance solution would best serve the needs and resources of current and future students. Potential vendors proposed operational and financial models to support the college's preferences. Today, the new 10,000-square-foot, 350-seat Mariner's Restaurant provides students with a variety of choices and the ability to eat, relax and socialize indoors or on the outdoor dining terrace. Special attention was given to the scale of large open space in the dining room creating a more intimate setting by combining large, warm, dimmable lighting fixtures and a faux wood ceiling. A mixture of seating options provides the college flexibility for dual functions after hours.

CAMPUS RETAIL

The bookstore operator, Neebo (formerly Nebraska Book Company), was hired in fall 2010 to transition the campus from an owner-operated bookstore to an outside operator. Perkins Eastman supported the Director of Auxiliary Services, Phyllis Broadwell, in hiring the operator, as well as programming and designing the future bookstore. Auxiliary services helped to establish a game plan for a future state-of-the-art book seller and retail establishment by identifying the desire to provide

students with main street amenities and services conveniently located on campus.

The new bookstore provides students with a Starbucks-like experience for coffee, smoothies and pastries. Students are able to sit and enjoy a beverage and their newly purchased book or magazine in between classes in a comfortable chair next to a fireplace. Textbooks are located on the second level, which allows the first floor level to display a large collection of spirit wear and other branded items for sale.

SUMMARY

The new Campus Center was heralded as a great success on opening day, with positive comments from the community, staff and the student body. "This will be a place where ideas develop and people who were merely acquaintances will become friends," said former Regent Jim Bishop. "This will shape the culture of our college."

The rebranding efforts for the college relied on auxiliary services to bring to life new operations, services and facilities to catapult institutional transformation. By strategically shaping the direction and outcomes of these new campus amenities to meet student needs and operational limitations, the College of Coastal Georgia can be assured of a sustainable program of housing, dining and retail that supports the institutional mission and growth.

Auxiliary services is continuing to rebrand and create an exciting environment for students at CCGA. This effort includes plans for a future resident hall, complete with an additional food service venue, and teaming with student affairs to bring outdoor amenities like lakefront volleyball pits and gazebos to Lakeside Village. 



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