



## Erb Memorial Union Post-Occupancy Study

Place-Based Belonging & Connections: Favorite EMU Places

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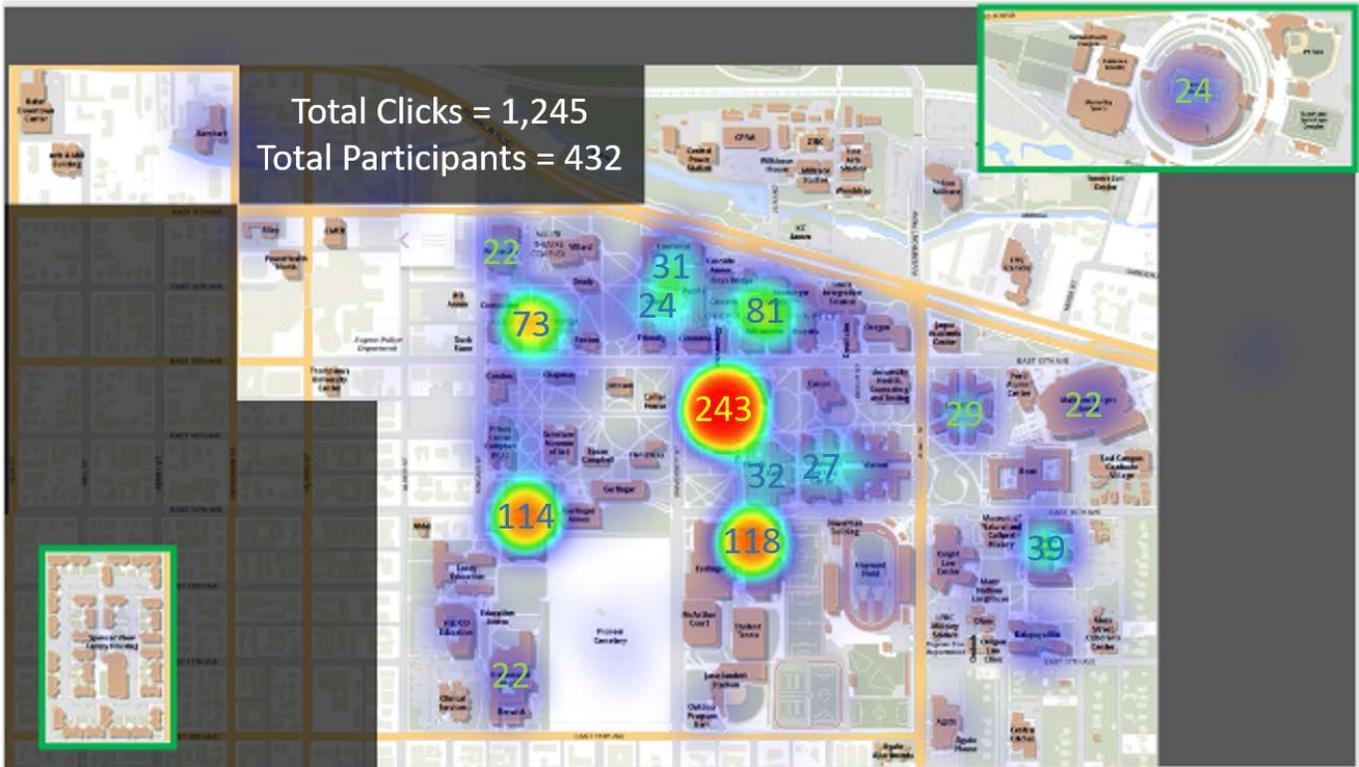
### *Background*

The recently-renovated Erb Memorial Union (EMU) is the heart of our campus, serving the entire University of Oregon (UO) community. No UO graduate has ever majored in student unions, but it would be hard to find a Duck whose college experience wasn't somehow shaped by the EMU. Since it first opened in 1950, the EMU has provided a place to study, eat, and gather. However, for a residential campus, a student union also means much more. It is a vital part of the university's vision to create a vibrant community of scholars. Because the EMU has been revitalized through recent renovations, is the heart of the UO campus, and is the top place on campus where students feel like they belong, the present research was designed to explore how students use and what students think and feel about the places that comprise the union.

### *Place-Based Belonging*

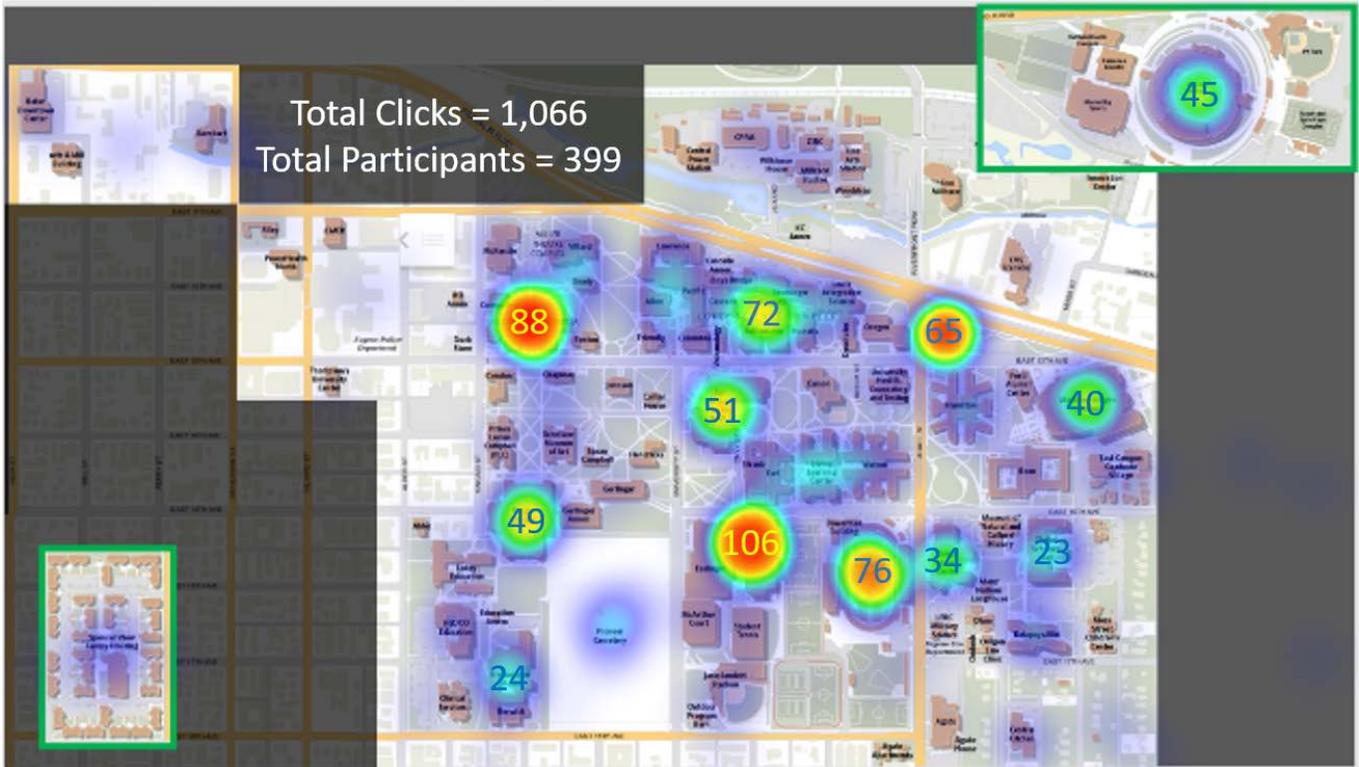
Through the present research as well as the Student Wellbeing and Success Initiative (SWaSI) research program, the Office of Assessment & Research (OAR) within the Division of Student Life is beginning to explore a novel aspect of belongingness. OAR is calling it place-based belonging to represent the idea that people's sense of belonging (i.e., of fitting in and being connected to others) has much to do with the physical places where human interaction occurs. For the last two academic years, students have chosen the EMU as the number one place on campus where they feel like they belong. Figures 1 and 2 depict where on campus students felt like they did and did not belong at the end of the 2018 academic year (spring 2018). The top five places where students felt like they belonged were the Erb Memorial Union (342 clicks), the Knight Library (114 clicks), the Student Recreation Center (118 clicks), the Lokey Science Complex (81 clicks), and the Lillis Business Complex (73 clicks). The top five places where students felt like they did NOT belong were the Student Recreation Center (106 clicks), the Lillis Business Complex (88 clicks), Hayward Field (76 clicks), the Lokey Science Complex (72 clicks), and the Jaqua Center (65 clicks).

Figure 1. Where Students (2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18 Cohorts) Feel Like they Belong on the University of Oregon Campus during Spring 2018



Note: Participant = clicked at least once on the map. The more red a location, the more often it was selected.

Figure 2. Where Students (2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18 Cohorts) Feel Like they Do NOT Belong on the University of Oregon Campus during Spring 2018



Note: Participant = clicked at least once on the map. The more red a location, the more often it was selected.

### *The Present Research*

The following research questions are being explored through a mixed-methods approach using observation, survey, and focus group data:

- How do students use different EMU places?
- Do EMU places serve the functions intended by the renovation?
- In what EMU places do students feel like they belong?
- What problems or barriers need to be addressed?

Observational data are still being compiled and focus group data collection will begin Fall 2018. Currently, the EMU Places Survey is being analyzed with a focus on understanding place-based belonging. The purpose of this report is to summarize what places in the EMU students selected as their favorites and why.

### *Favorite Places & Why*

Students were asked to select up to three favorite places by clicking on floor-plan maps of the EMU. Because the EMU is large, putting all of the EMU floor plans into one map would have reduced students' ability to interact with them easily. Hence, the floor plans were assembled into two maps (map 1: ground level and level 1; map 2: mezzanine, level 2, and level 3). Three-click limits were imposed on each of the maps, because all three of a given student's favorite places could plausibly be on one of the two maps. This meant that students could functionally select up to six places, even though they were instructed to select up to three. Most students ( $n = 390$ ) adhered to instructions ( $n = 75$  selected more than three places). In total, there were 1,444 clicks across both maps, and  $N = 465$  students (of  $N = 489$  survey completions) clicked on at least one place on the maps. Three open, public places were by far students' favorites: Fishbowl, Student Atrium, and O Lounge (see Table 1 and Figures 3 and 4). Several program-oriented places were also quite popular (e.g., Mills International Center, Craft Center). Demographics of students who completed the survey are summarized in Table 2.

Table 1  
Favorite EMU Places Click Counts and Percentages

<i>Place</i>	<i>Click Count</i>	<i>% of Clicks</i>	<i>% of Participants</i>
Fishbowl	150	10.4%	32.3%
East & South Student Atrium	118	8.2%	25.4%
O Lounge	113	7.8%	24.3%
Courtyard Dining Area	77	5.3%	16.6%
Falling Sky Pizzeria and Public House	55	3.8%	11.8%
Mills International Center	53	3.7%	11.4%
Taylor Lounge	49	3.4%	10.5%
Craft Center	46	3.2%	9.9%
McMillan Gallery	39	2.7%	8.4%
Multicultural Center	38	2.6%	8.2%
2nd Floor Hallway Study Tables	27	1.9%	5.8%
Center for Student Involvement Resource Center	27	1.9%	5.8%
Computer Lab	26	1.8%	5.6%
Redwood Auditorium	26	1.8%	5.6%
Ballroom	24	1.7%	5.2%

Fresh Market Corner	24	1.7%	5.2%
Duck Nest	23	1.6%	4.9%
Student Lounge	20	1.4%	4.3%
Total Clicks	1,444		
Total Participants	465		

Figure 3. Students' Favorite Places in the EMU (Ground Level & Level 1; Spring 2018)



Note: Participant = clicked at least once on the map (n = 447). The more red a location, the more often it was selected.

Figure 4. Students' Favorite Places in the EMU (Mezzanine, Level 2, & Level 3; Spring 2018)



Note: Participant = clicked at least once on the map (n = 242). The more red a location, the more often it was selected.

Table 2  
Demographics of Study Sample

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Total Sample</i>
Gender	
N	479
%Woman	71.6%
%Man	24.4%
%Non-binary	4.0%
Race/Ethnicity	
N	484
%Student of color	21.3%
%White	58.5%
%Asian	18.2%
%Unknown/Prefer not to respond	2.1%

After selecting places, students were asked follow-up questions about those particular places. One follow-up question was an open-ended response prompt: ***“What specifically about the (selected place) makes it one of your favorites?”*** Textual data that students generated based on this prompt were analyzed for places that were selected at least 20 times.

Grounded Theory was employed to discover emergent themes, patterns, and trends in the textual data. Grounded Theory is a research tool used for the purpose of understanding the structures of people’s experiences by building themes and categories from qualitative data. Qualitative data in the present research were analyzed using a coding process to create a storyline about what EMU places meant to the people experiencing them. Forming the basic unit of analysis, open coding was used to create categories that fit the textual data by looking for distinct concepts emerging from responses. On the basis of these initial codes, axial coding was used to confirm that the open codes accurately represent the data and explore how they were related to each other. On the following pages, tables constructed for each EMU place represent emerging themes and provide examples from the categories. Additionally, a word cloud was created for the most favorite place: the Fishbowl.

**Fishbowl** (*n=150 clicks, 143 open responses*)

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Category</b>
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural lighting and large windows</li> </ul>	INCUBATOR: Multi-use place for fostering/building community and serving needs
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet friends, do homework and run into people you know</li> </ul>	
Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lots of options for food and drink</li> </ul>	
Central Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A known place with programming and always something going on</li> </ul>	



In sum, students mention the Fishbowl as a multi-use place that serves many of their needs. It is a place that provides natural lighting, studying/working, social and eating/drinking place to build, foster and nurture community.

**Atrium** (n=118 clicks, 110 open responses)

Themes	Examples	Category
Ambiance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural lighting and large windows; feeling of relaxation because quieter</li> </ul>	CENTRAL RECHARGING STATION: Multi-use place for allowing its occupants to feel connected to the rest of the EMU, find time to relax, recharge (self & electronics) and enjoy the open space that promotes a relaxing ambiance for working, eating and/or socializing
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet friends, do homework and run into people you know</li> </ul>	
Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lots of options for food and drink nearby</li> </ul>	
Central Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An easy place to locate, find seating and kill time between classes that is central</li> </ul>	

In sum, students mention the Atrium as place to recharge and relax. It hosts a series of seating and studying options that embrace a connectedness feeling to the rest of the EMU through its high ceilings, large windows and views.

### O Lounge (n=113 clicks, 105 open responses)

Themes	Examples	Category
Ambiance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tucked away spaces combined with natural and dim lighting elicit a quiet, but focused place; feeling of relaxation because quieter, but near many things</li> </ul>	NOOK FUSION: A place in between in which students use for studying, focusing, socializing, eating/drinking if they need to kill time, recharge with electrical outlets, but can be hidden and seen depending on where they decide to sit
Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A place to socialize, eat/drink and work in between classes or just go to study away, but yet still connected</li> </ul>	
Convenient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Close to amenities, food/drink and depending on day near activities and experiences</li> </ul>	

Students indicate that the O Lounge is just that a place to ‘loungue’ and get away, but still be seen. It is a place that benefits from both natural and dim lighting in which students can adequately focus, work, socialize, eat/drink and play depending on their specific needs. Meanwhile, it is close to their classes and other EMU amenities as needed.

### Courtyard Dining (n=77 clicks, 74 open responses)

Themes	Examples	Category
Open & Convenient Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accessible and available place to sit, eat, hang out and work if needed, close to lots of things</li> </ul>	‘MEAL EATERS’ HAVEN: An open and accessible place for enjoying a meal, friends and getting some work done especially when the Fishbowl is busy
Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A place to enjoy a meal that is close and quick and all the smells from nearby eateries</li> </ul>	

Courtyard dining area in the EMU is a place that allows ‘meal eaters’ to indulge in their nourishment, meet friends, hang out and get some work done if needed. It is a convenient spot and a go-to place if the Fishbowl is busy and doesn’t have seating available.

### Falling Sky (n=55 clicks, 52 open responses)

Themes	Examples	Category
Atmosphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A 'chill' place to relax with friendly &amp; timely customer service on campus, but feels like an escape from campus with options to get work done if needed</li> </ul>	PUB INFUSION: A campus pub away from the campus bustle offers local and adequately priced food/drink with options for people to socialize, attend events or work if needed
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet friends for events, between or after classes</li> </ul>	
Food/Drink	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Great local food and drink that is priced just right</li> </ul>	

Falling Sky is a local pub on campus that allows students to escape the daily campus life and enjoy local beer with delicious food at great prices. There are a variety of events to attend or options to just hang out and 'chill,' meet up with friends and work or study. The friendly and timely customer service of Falling Sky staff is one that creates the 'pub infusion' that so many have praised.

### Mills International Center (n=53 clicks, 48 open responses)

Themes	Examples	Category
Inclusive & Diverse Ambience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lots of diverse music, games and events; comfortable furniture and friendly staff</li> </ul>	HOME AWAY FROM HOME: A place that embodies a welcoming and inclusive ambience for students to connect in diverse ways, but in a comfortable environment.
Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A great place to meet and make friends through events or informally</li> </ul>	

The Mills International Center embodies a welcoming ambience for its occupants through the playing of diverse varieties of music, having many experiences, events and opportunities to connect with peers, those different from one another and even get studying done if needed. The friendly and welcoming staff are mentioned as making the environment comfortable for all and elicits a happy 'home' feeling for its students.

### Taylor Lounge (n=49 clicks, 46 open responses)

Themes	Examples	Category
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Piano and fireplace are the desirable things students mention about this pace</li> </ul>	LIVING ROOM: A 'homey' place that elicits a home away from home feeling with the relaxing piano music and fireplace, but also a place that you can work or meet people.

In sum, students mention Taylor Lounge as a place to go and relax while listening to the piano along with the enjoying the fireplace. Students enjoy this location for its ambience.

**Craft Center** (*n=46 clicks, 44 open responses*)

Themes	Examples	Category
Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Always something to do and make through various activities and programs that allows students to take a break from other things</li> </ul>	A TO MAKE & DO PLACE: This is a place for students to disconnect, make and do something creative and innovative either related to their passions and/or curricula.
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Friendly and helpful staff create a welcoming environment</li> </ul>	
Resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A free service for students to utilize facilities and tools to be creative in a supportive environment</li> </ul>	

The Craft Center is a valuable resource for students to engage in creative play, while making and doing things related to their interests. The extremely friendly and helpful staff provide a strong foundation for students to create things on their own or through structured programming and/or classes. Students rate the quality of the facilities, tools and equipment as a benefit and are appreciative of this service.

**McMillan Gallery** (*n=39 clicks, 36 open responses*)

Themes	Examples	Category
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lots of natural lighting and windows; the furniture is versatile for studying, work or relaxing; art gallery provides something to look at or do</li> </ul>	VERSATILE AMBIENCE: A place to relax, study and/or work while soaking up the light from the windows along with beautiful art displayed.

McMillan Gallery is a smaller place dedicated to celebrating art, while providing an environment that elicits relaxation and is quiet enough to study and get work done.

**Multicultural Center** (*n=38 clicks, 35 open responses*)

Themes	Examples	Category
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lots of opportunities to network and connect either formally or informally</li> </ul>	HOME BASE: An inclusive and safe place to feel at home away from home, to connect with friends and those like you with a variety and depth of programming
Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Variety of clubs, programming and the ability to use office space</li> </ul>	

In sum, students mention the Multicultural Center as a place to make connections, relax and kill time between classes. Many mention the use of the office space and the variety of clubs and programs that exist. They also mention the inclusiveness and safety of the place that promotes a welcoming environment specifically for people of color.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Hallway Study Tables (*n=27 clicks, 24 open responses*)

Themes	Examples	Category
Industrious Ambience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quiet place away from the typical EMU distractions</li> </ul>	QUIET OUTLET: A study area that is quiet enough to work, but visible to the rest of the EMU. It is a place to plug in, work and/or relax in between.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Hallway Study Tables are off the beaten path, but still close enough to view the rest of the EMU.

### Center for Student Involvement Resource Center (*n=27 clicks, 26 open responses*)

Themes	Examples	Category
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lots of games, crafts and resources for student organizations</li> </ul>	WELCOMING RESOURCE: A central and inclusive resource for student organizations to meet formally or informally.
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Great place to meet up and have meetings</li> </ul>	

The Center for Student Involvement Resource Center provide student organizations a one-stop resource hub that is welcoming, inclusive and open to all students.

### Computer Lab (*n=26 clicks, 25 open responses*)

Themes	Examples	Category
Utility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many options for computers, printing and working to help students</li> </ul>	CENTRALIZED COMPUTING: A conveniently located lab near dorms, restrooms, and food that has access to technology needed to support students' schoolwork.
Central Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Closest to many dorms and proximity to restrooms and food</li> </ul>	

The Computer Lab is a quietly and convenient lab that provides students accessible technology to support them with their school work.

### Redwood Auditorium (*n=26 clicks, 23open responses*)

Themes	Examples	Category
Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A lot of popular events held here</li> </ul>	COOL & OPEN EVENT SPACE: A common and known place for hosting some popular late-night programs.

The Redwood Auditorium is the cool and open event space hosting some of EMU's most well-known events such as Ducks After Dark and the BE Series. Students indicate that they enjoy the large space, which can accommodate many people.

**Ballroom** (n=24 clicks, 22 open responses)

Themes	Examples	Category
Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Lots of events here, great resource</li></ul>	LARGE EVENT SPACE: A place for many different community, campus and student organization events in a nice location.

In sum, students recognize the Ballroom as a venue to host large events and have generally been satisfied with their experiences in this place.

**Fresh Market Corner** (n=24 clicks, 21 open responses)

Themes	Examples	Category
Healthy Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Many accommodating dietary options; Centrally located and quick</li></ul>	QUICK HEALTHY FOOD SPOT: A versatile food spot accommodating all dietary restrictions in a convenient place.

The Fresh Market Corner is liked for its healthy options and quick, friendly service.

**Duck Nest** (n=23 clicks, 21 open responses)

Themes	Examples	Category
Relaxing Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A place to relax; resources and free things to induce relaxation and 'calm'</li></ul>	DE-STRESS SPOT: A hidden gem that provides ways for students to relax through free kits, instruction and/or events.

The Duck Nest is a hidden gem within the EMU that students can utilize to de-stress through relaxing resources. Whether it is through a guided meditation workshop, a free class, dog therapy or from aromatherapy kits, the Duck Nest is a place to de-stress.

**Student Lounge** (n=20 clicks, 20 open responses)

Themes	Examples	Category
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Natural lighting, good views of the rest of the EMU, lots of outlets for electronics and easy to find a table</li></ul>	QUIET WORKSPACE: A small place that is bright and quiet enough to work and study with a lot of outlets.

In sum, students mention the Student Lounge as a secluded place that is quiet enough to work and study with adequate access to outlets for electronics.

**Recommendations**

The above information can be used in many ways. It is important to note that environment, from the design of windows leveraging natural lighting to the furniture, was the most often mentioned reason for why specific places were selected. This means that resourcing the maintenance of these environmental areas is something that should be continuously reviewed and discussed among building management staff.

The friendliness of staff was often mentioned in reference to creating a 'warm' and 'welcoming' environment for students. This should be praised and continued. Planning in professional development for staff is critical to ensuring they are engaged.

The top favorite places were large, open areas, which suggests that students like to make use of places informally, by themselves and with peers. The balance between implementing structured programming in these areas and leaving them unstructured should be discussed. Too much structure may negatively impact the organic engagement students enjoy in these places.