



Incorporating Student Input for a Better Project Outcome

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Incorporating feedback from the eventual end user into the design and construction of new projects is not that unusual. Facilities personnel, designers, engineers, and contractors do it every day. However, incorporating ideas and suggestions from a whole student group, and in fact a national student group, is another matter. That's exactly what occurred for the new award-winning McGovern Medical School Student Lounge at University of Texas Health Science Center

(UTHealth) in Houston. This presentation will outline how this process worked, how UTHealth and the contractor, Centennial Contractors Enterprises, Inc., partnered together to maximize space utilization to give the students a world class space where future doctors and researchers from around the world can relax and learn, and how each element of the finished project contributes to the success of the students. Reflecting the diversity of students and their needs today, the finished space includes both open areas as well as private study rooms, gaming systems, glass countertops with the ability to write and share ideas on the surfaces, adjustable lighting, a kitchenette, a lounge area with televisions, and even a separate dedicated area for student meditation and prayer. The new space

fulfilled the number one item on the wish list of the McGovern Organization of Student Representatives. Representing medical students nationwide, the Organization of Student Representatives (OSR) provides an active role for students in advancing the Association of American Medical Colleges mission to improve the nation's health. McGovern's OSRs are a resource to students and faculty who are interested in projects or initiatives that include medical education, student affairs, legislative action, and diversity and inclusion.

The presentation will also address the challenges of overcoming a delayed project start giving the facilities team and the contractor a compressed schedule of only two months to complete this project. Also adding to the challenges of this project was the need to work around activities while the building remained in full operation for the duration.

Highlighting the success of the project, it received recognition by the Commercial Construction and Renovation magazine, resulting in a 2020 Project Profile Award and feature in the March/April 2020 issue. By sharing this case study, perhaps other schools and universities will be inspired to open communications with their students, formally gather student feedback, and incorporate the suggestions into building spaces that better connect student working habits and goals, while also providing for their diverse needs and allowing space for downtime and reflection.

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