

University Center 2010 Initiative Student Referendum

Frequently Asked Questions

How would the University Center Transformation Project benefit the UH student body?

By updating, maintaining, and transforming the existing University Center, the UH student body will see many benefits. A well-maintained University Center with new mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems can guarantee the UC continues to provide high-quality and continuous service to the UH campus community. A Transformed University Center will provide the student body access to new services and enhance existing services, which means everything from: more lounge spaces to hang out with friends; to faster lines at the food court; to an improved first-impression provided to students as they attend Cougar Preview events and orientation programs. It's more than a new coat of paint and a retro-fit - it's the Transformation of our University (Student) Center.

What is included in the UC Transformation Project?

The Transformation Project of the University Center will provide:

- **Enhanced dining options** based upon student voice and input and an enhanced service flow: **shorter, faster and more efficient lines.**
- A new set of spacious **study areas** and **relaxing lounges** designed to provide every Cougar a sense of place in their home away from home.
- Safe and secure **24-hour access** to lounge spaces (and great study zones).
- Next generation meeting and multi-purpose spaces within a **centralized conference center** (located in the UC Underground).
- New synergistic **student organization center – the new home of student involvement at UH.**
- Centralized **one-stop-shop retail corridor** for all UC shopping and service opportunities (including full-service bank, hair and beauty salon, technology store, Shasta's ice cream, UH ID card services, UC CreationStation and more).
- Enhanced **shaded outdoor lounge spaces** to facilitate formal and informal student gathering and community building (along the South Lawn of the UC and on the UC North Patio).
- **New outdoor amphitheatre** for programming and other student-oriented events (located adjacent to the UC North Patio).
- Improved **natural light**, an open environment, additional windows and **a new building skin** throughout the interior and exterior of the University Center.
- The most **updated technology** (including improved wireless internet access, state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment for meetings and events, and LED screens which highlight campus events and involvement opportunities as well as events in the UC).
- Sustainable design principles for a more **Eco-Friendly University Center.**
- A visible representation of school spirit and tradition and the pride of the **Cougar Nation.**

Why should I support the Transformation Project if I'm not going to be around to see the new building?

In 1998, students voted to add a fee to fund the construction of the Campus Recreation and Wellness Center at UH, when few of them would be present when the building opened in 2003. They invested in the future of the University of Houston and what was best for campus life at that time, just as now you have the opportunity to give back to future Cougars. In a sense, this is your first contribution as an alumnus.

If the fee reaches its cap in 2014, why doesn't it go down later? Once the construction finishes, why do I have to keep paying the \$160/semester Fee? Can't you just give that money back to the students?

In order to afford a hundred-million dollar Transformed facility, the University Center is taking out 30-year bonds. Just like when you buy a house (and subsequently have a mortgage payment after you sign the papers), the UC will continue to pay debt service until the bonds are completely paid off. Should the University Center have a budget surplus from the increased student fees (scheduled to occur between 2038 and 2044), additional fee dollars wouldn't be treated as "profit" for the UC--they would go into a deferred maintenance fund to do our best to ensure that in 30 years, students don't have to face another fee increase.

The University Center looks fine. Why do we need improvements?

The UC Transformation Project would be the first comprehensive renovation that the University Center has undergone since it opened in 1967. The facility shows many signs of aging: deteriorating infrastructure, fixtures and equipment; wear and tear on interior and exterior walls; crumbling exterior banisters and stairwells; water and mildew damage; roof leaks; and accessibility and life safety issues. When the building opened in 1967, enrollment at UH was only about 20,000 students. Today, enrollment is over 36,000. As many as 15,000 members of the UH community on average pass through the University Center on a heavy class day. The eating areas and lounges have insufficient space during peak traffic hours. Over 7,000 meetings and events are scheduled in the UC each year, with additional requests turned away for lack of meeting space.

Why can't the University Center be improved with my current tuition?

Tuition dollars are used to hire faculty, pay for academic buildings, etc. The University Center's operating budget is funded by the current UC Fee, self-generated revenue from the various tenants and retail services housed within the University Center and the UC Satellite, and some funding from the Student Fees Advisory Committee (SFAC). The phased-in increase for the University Center Transformation Project will be dedicated solely to improve the UC.

We have classroom buildings in worse shape than the University Center, and parking on campus is such a problem, shouldn't we fix the classroom buildings first or build another parking garage before we move forward with the University Center Transformation Project?

Money to fix or build academic buildings comes from an entirely separate funding source. Just like we would not use university budget dollars to support a renovation or new University Center, we would also not use student fees to fix classroom buildings. As for fixing the parking problem, there are plans to build several parking garages in the near future. Those garages will be funded by parking and/or transportation fees.

How have students been involved in the development of the University Center Transformation Project?

The University Center and Associated Facilities prides itself on supporting a student governance process in which policies, practices, enhancements and the like are all approved by the University Center Policy Board (UCPB) prior to implementation. Consequently, through the UC Master Plan of Renovation process, we have had student involvement not only included in focus groups and open forums, but also as voting members of the Project Executive Committee. The UC 2010 Initiative is being Co-Chaired by two student leaders who are coordinating all aspects of the UC Student Referendum.

If approved, how will students continue to be involved with this project moving forward?

If the UC Student Referendum is approved, students will continue to lead the advocacy for the UC Transformation Project through the approval process (which includes the University administration, the UH System Board of Regents, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the Texas Legislature), as well as serve on the UC Transformation Project Leadership Team, and all work groups (including technology, programming, MEP, design, furniture, fixtures and equipment, etc.). This will ensure that UH leadership and the architects will be listening to and incorporating students' ideas, wants and concerns throughout this process.

Will the Transformation Project be ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant?

Absolutely.

Will the Transformed University Center be a more eco-friendly building?

Every effort will be made to ensure sustainable design principles and eco-friendly standards are incorporated in this project.

I never, or very rarely, use the University Center. Why do I have to pay for it?

The University Center's purpose is to be the center of campus life. The UC supports numerous student activities and programs and plays a major role in recruitment and retention. The Transformed University Center will improve the quality of student life for UH students, add to the university's reputation and prestige, and will add value to your degree.

Are there changes identified for the UC Satellite?

The UC Satellite was substantially updated as a result of damage caused by Tropical Storm Allison when it converged on the Houston area in June 2001. The gut renovation took 18 months to complete (fully re-opened in January of 2003). Consequently, both the infrastructure and the upgraded facilities and services are very successful. However, based on the recommendations from the UC Master Plan, we have designated \$1,020,925 to improve and upgrade access for all members of the UH community, and especially for our significant population of students, faculty and staff who are physically challenged.

Will the University Center be closed during the Transformation Project?

Absolutely not! Construction would be planned in phases, meaning that the entire building will not be closed at any one time. Parts of the building will need to be closed for defined time periods, but at no point should the entire building be shut down for the Transformation Project to progress. The UC's goal is to keep all services up and running as much as possible throughout the Transformation Project.

If approved, once the University Center Transformation Project has been completed, will there be additional increases to the UC Fee?

As you will note in the detailed cost model, we have planned conservatively to cover the UC Transformation Project, and subsequently the required debt service. It would be highly unlikely to require an increase for a significant number of years once the UC Transformation Project is complete. In addition, if there would be a need (based on the state of the economy near the end of the next decade, the Student Government Association Bill which authorized the UC Student Referendum,

also indicates they will want to maintain the current approval authority (the only fee on campus that SGA must vote to approve for an increase to be implemented).

This is an expensive fee. How much will the University Center Transformation Project cost?

The total cost is projected to be \$99,997,213. This figure includes: site improvements and demolition, building construction costs in 2008 dollars, site work, escalation/inflation, phasing costs, program contingency, Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment (FF&E), moving expenses, abatement costs, a % for the Arts and a UH project management fee. In addition, the fee will be used to pay the debt service on the bonds that will need to be issued to finance this project. You can view all of UC Transformation Project costs on our website (www.uh.edu/uc2010) under "Detailed Cost Model" on the left navigation.

When will the construction process begin?

If the UC Student Referendum is approved, approval would need to be obtained from the University administration, the UH System Board of Regents, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the Texas Legislature. If these occur as planned, an approximate start date would be May 2011.

When will the Transformed University Center be completed?

If the transformation process begins in May 2011, an anticipated completion would be Spring 2014, as the Transformation Project will have three (3) phases in order to continue to provide support to the UH community.

What is the phased-in increase to the University Center Fee going to be used for?

The graduated increase to the UC Fee will be used to cover all expenses for the UC Transformation Project, and then will continue to cover the debt service on the bonds that will need to be purchased prior to the construction process commencing.

During the phasing of the Transformation Project, will the University Center be able to provide space for meetings and programs?

The University Center and Associated Facilities will work aggressively and creatively to find alternate space and locations for meetings and programs. Registered Student Organization requests will be a top priority. We intend that, while student events and programs may have to move around the campus somewhat during the Transformation Project, the number of student-sponsored activities on the campus should not decline during that time. We hope all of us, the UCAF and the hundreds of student organizations, will be able to work together to get through the transformation period and look forward to the time when we will have increased capacity and improved space for all of our events.

What is the University Center Transformation Project?

In 2007, the University Center contracted with Holzman Moss Architects to conduct a Master Plan of Renovation Feasibility Study for the University Center and the UC Satellite. The study included an on-line survey of students to which nearly 3,500 students responded. Students also participated in open forums and focus groups with the architects to talk about concepts that could meet the needs of current and future students. The end result of the study was a list of recommended upgrades, additions and renovations to update the University Center and improve the facility for UH to be competitive with our peer benchmark institutions.

The report by the architect team acknowledged the important role the University Center plays in recruitment of new students to UH. The University Center is often the first stop for prospective students and their families for Cougar Preview events and through New Student Orientation programs. It is also a place where students become involved in campus life, forge lifelong friendships, obtain invaluable experience as student employees and serve the institution as student leaders.

The study also recommended areas for improvement, including a new entrance on the southwest corner facing the MD Anderson Library, enclosing of the UC Arbor to provide a new set of spacious study areas and relaxing lounges and additional space for new retail services, enhanced dining options, the development of a Student Organization Center on the second floor, shaded outdoor lounge spaces, a new outdoor amphitheatre, upgrades to the rapidly deteriorating infrastructure, multi-purpose/flexible spaces within a centralized conference center (located in the UC Underground) and a facility that represents a Top Tier institution. The recommendations were based largely on what students said they wanted in the survey.

For more information visit the UC 2010 Initiative website at:

www.uh.edu/uc2010

or call the UC Administrative Services and Operations Office at: 713-743-5280