

# CEC TASK FORCE REPORT

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HAMILTON COLLEGE  
MAY 7, 2009

## **Contents**

- Summary
- 1. Background
- 2. Formal Charge to the Task Force
- 3. Operating Principles
- 4. Action Plan
- 5. Feedback
- 6. Basic Structural Requirements of a CEC
- 7. Spaces Considered
- 8. Recommendations
- 9. Additional Recommendations

## Summary

This report presents recommendations for the reallocation of space for a Hamilton College Cultural Education Center (CEC).

- The task force recommends that a CEC be located in the first floor of ALCC after its renovation and expansion. The task force bases this recommendation on three main criteria:
  - the central location of the ALCC,
  - its potential for expansion in the short-term and in the long-term, and
  - the fact that it meets the basic requirements needed for a CEC in terms of space.
  
- As the program expands and consolidates, the CEC can expand to adjacent buildings that will be available as Hamilton completes its buildings master plan.
  
- The task force recommends Azel Backus House as a second option. Although Azel Backus House meets some of the basic structural requirements the task force has identified, its main drawback is that physical expansion is not feasible.
  
- The task force recognizes that there is a great sense of urgency for the creation of a CEC among many students. The task force recommends:
  - that budget and facility planning start as soon as possible,
  - that a committee be formed to determine the mission and goals of the center, its governance, and programming, and
  - that a Director and, available on funding, an office assistant be hired for the CEC.

In the text that follows, the report presents a background to the creation of a CEC, the formal charge to the task force, the operating principles the task force has followed to complete the report, the steps the task force has taken, feedback from students, the basic requirements for space, and task force recommendations.

## 1. Background to the Creation of a Cultural Education Center

The information in this section is a *partial* summary of proposals, motions, and resolutions by the student group Social Justice Initiative (SJI), the Faculty, and Student Assembly regarding the creation of a CEC. The SJI has done a great amount of work regarding the creation of a CEC before the task was formed. The text below does not list all existing proposals and discussion concerning a CEC. The summary does focus as to how different constituencies on campus have described the space requirements of a CEC. These documents have guided the task force in its evaluation of available spaces.

- September 2007: The Social Justice Initiative (SJI) proposes the Bob Moses Multicultural Center. The proposal suggests that the center could be located in the Afro-Latin Cultural Center (ALCC), the Emerson Literary Society (ELS), or North and South Court.
- October 2008: The SJI presents a proposal for a Cultural Education Center that calls for a foyer, a library/resource room, a lab, lecture/banquet room, kitchen, conference room, set-aside space for ten organizations, open common room area, and an office of the director.
- November 2, 2008: The SJI presents a proposal for a CEC that calls for a meeting space for 50 people, a lecture space, a lab, a resource room, classroom/conference rooms, and a space for the Womyn's Center. The proposal suggests Azel Backus house as an interim space for the CEC.
- November 4, 2008: The Faculty approves (by a vote of 85 to 7) a motion regarding the creation of a CEC. The proposal does not call for specific structural features of the CEC.
- November 10, 2008: The Student Assembly passes unanimously a resolution regarding the creation of a CEC. The resolution does not detail the type of facilities that are needed. The rationale of the Assembly's views also states that the CEC

could be located in one of the buildings that will be vacated after the renovation of ELS.

- December 2008: The SJI submits a letter to the Board of Trustees that includes Azel Backus House, Emerson Literary Society, and North Court and South Court as options the CEC.
- January 2009: the Strategic Plan states that “we will evaluate the reallocation of existing space for the creation of a cultural education center whose goal is to engage students and faculty members from all backgrounds in an ongoing examination of their similarities and differences, as well as the effect of shifting demographics on all aspects of society.”<sup>1</sup> The Strategic Plan does not make specific references to the structural characteristics of the CEC.
- January 7, 2009: Acting President Joe Urgo delivers the formal charge to the task force.
- May 7, 2009: The task force presents its recommendations.

## **2. CEC Task Force Charge**

January 7, 2009, Acting President Joe Urgo delivers the following formal charge to the task force:

‘The Dean of Faculty, Vice President for Administration & Finance and Dean of Students charge a task force with examining available spaces based on the renovation of Emerson Hall (formerly Emerson Literary Society) and make recommendations for the creation of a cultural education center. This is consistent with language in Hamilton’s 2009 Strategic Plan, which explains the importance of dedicated space as part of the College’s diversity initiatives:

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<sup>1</sup> Foundations for Hamilton’s Next 200 Years, Strategic Plan, January 2009, page 9. Available on-line: <https://my.hamilton.edu/strategicplan/strategicplanfinalsl.pdf>

“The links between curricular and co-curricular programming expand the dimensions of a Hamilton education. In order to be a college whose students will be intellectually prepared for the society into which they will graduate, we will ensure that Hamilton has programs and services that foster our commitment to inclusiveness. For example, we will evaluate the reallocation of existing space for the creation of a cultural education center whose goal is to engage students and faculty from all backgrounds in an ongoing examination of their similarities and differences, as well as the effect of shifting demographics on all aspects of society. The community will confront and engage most rewardingly with the issue of diversity when it is pursued not just as a social issue, but also as an intellectual one. Diversity thereby expands the breadth and augments the rigor of the intellectual life of the College.”

*2009 Strategic Plan [p.9]*

The task force will consult first with the Associate Vice President for Facilities and Planning, who will provide several options for consideration, and then with other individuals on campus who will inform its discussions. The task force will present its recommendations, which may include programming ideas for the cultural education center, to the Dean of Faculty, Vice President for Administration and Finance, and Dean of Students no later than May 7, 2009.’

The members of the task force are Edwin Gaston ‘11, Denise Ghartey ‘12, Bill Huggins, Associate Director of Physical Plant; Lisa Magnarelli, Assistant Dean of Students for Campus Life/Director of Student Activities; Angel David Nieves, Associate Professor of Africana Studies; and Julio Videras, Acting Associate Dean of Faculty (January 1, 2009 – June 30, 2009).

### **3. Operating Principles**

The task force has used the following operating principles to frame the process of data collection and the evaluation of existing space:

1. The task force has evaluated existing spaces. The task force has not considered the option of a new free-standing building.
2. The task force has focused on the evaluation of space both in the short-term and in the long-term. The task force has examined spaces that can be ready for the 09/10 academic year and has discussed long-term options to accommodate the potential consolidation and expansion of the CEC.
3. The task force has not discussed the mission and goals of the CEC, governance, or programming. The task force believes that another committee should address these issues.
4. The task force has focused on students' needs for space. The task force has encouraged students to take the lead in articulating their requirements. To facilitate conversations among student groups and promote consensus about common needs and goals, the task force has conducted a total of six open meetings during Spring 09.
5. The task force believes that the CEC should not replicate existing spaces on campus for student activities, but rather provide spaces that augment our existing facilities.
6. The task force has asked student groups to avoid making claims for the exclusive use of office/storage space in the CEC. The task force bases this principle on three points: (1) the renovation of ELS will provide office and storage space for student groups, (2) it is unlikely that a space that would be available in the short term could accommodate office and storage for multiple student groups, and (3) the creation of the CEC by Fall 09 requires a wide consensus and collaboration that might be compromised by discussing which groups would or would not be located in the CEC.

#### **4. Task-Force Plan**

The task force has taken the following steps to collect and evaluate data:

- Meet with Steve Bellona, Associate Vice President for Facilities & Planning.

- Gather information about potential spaces and their structural characteristics.
- Generate a list of “research” questions and identify organization and individuals to contact.
- Contact student groups to gather information about physical/structural needs given programming.
- Gather information about CECs in other institutions.

## **5. Feedback**

### *5.1 Feedback from Students*

A task force sub-committee met with the leaders and representatives of various student organizations from across campus to discuss their current and future space needs. The task force sub-committee met with students on six separate occasions to discuss the immediate and long-term needs of their constituencies. Students from these organizations, including the Black/Latina/o Student Union (BLSU); the Asian Cultural Society (ACS); La Unidad Latina, Lambda Upsilon Lambda, Fraternity, Inc. (LUL); Rainbow Alliance; the Womyn’s Center; Posse; and Hillel provided feedback to an initial survey. The following seven (7) questions were asked:

1. What is the size of your organization currently?
2. What do you expect your numbers to be in the long term?
3. What do you see as your short term space needs?
4. List the most important space requirements specific to your organization? (e.g., Hillel will need a Kosher kitchen.)
5. What are your long-term space requirements?
6. What kind of attendance do you have at your smallest events?
7. What kind of attendance do you have at your largest events?

Survey results varied according to the needs of each organization based on their current membership. The current average size of organizations surveyed was 40. Long-term projected growth over the next few years was 50. The smallest events hosted by the organizations were 35 attendees. The largest events hosted 100 attendees.

The most common short-term need expressed by all the organizations was for a large flexible meeting space (or multipurpose room) that could hold roughly 50-75 people comfortably. One group noted “ ... preferably a comfortable meeting space such as a lounge, or library setting – **academic but comfortable.**” The large meeting space would be flexible enough to hold small lectures, a staging area for cultural events, and the ability to be sub-divided for more intimate gatherings.

Students repeatedly expressed, in almost every response, the need for a “comfortable” and a “safe” space that allowed for use by not only students, but faculty and staff as well.

All the organizations expressed the need for a flexible full-working kitchen where meetings might be held around a common dining table (ie. dinners hosted by faculty, a “Kitchen Conversations Series,” etc.).

In addition, the organizations listed the need for a small library space, a small conference/meeting room, and a computer lab.

Every organization also responded with the need for a full range of current, state-of-art audiovisual equipment with digital projection capabilities, flexible screens, and speaker system.

### *5.2 Cultural Centers at Peer Institutions*

A number of our peer institutions support cultural centers in a variety of forms. Bates, Claremont, Colby, Colgate, Connecticut College, Swarthmore and Vassar all provide kitchen space, lounge/meeting areas, small seminar rooms and a resource (or computer) room. In addition, these programs also have full-time staff, and in a number of cases, multiple staff members.

The task force has received some responses from directors of centers in peer institutions that are useful when considering desirable and undesirable structural characteristics of a CEC. Jocelyn Tejada, the director of the ALANA Center at Vassar, writes that the center is less active during the day than the evening. One of the reasons Ms Tejada gives for this use

pattern is that the center is not in a central location. Karla Benson Rutten, director of Lealtad-Suzuki Center at Macalester, writes that the center is located in a corner area on the first floor of an office building and that ideally she would like to have a building or an entire floor in order to designate space for programs and group work rather than having to reserve space on campus.

## **6. Basic Structural Requirements of a CEC**

Based on our conversations with students and the configuration of similar centers at other colleges, the members of the task force recommend that the CEC meet the following criteria:

1. Central location: a central location has both symbolic value and practical value.
2. A space that allows for expansion.
3. A Director's office.
4. Kitchen space.
5. One or more 12-person seminar rooms.
6. A resource/computer room (five or six stations).
7. Lounge/meeting space to accommodate around 50 people to provide additional areas for socializing, meeting, and a variety of programming (similar to the Glen House).

In addition, the task force believes that a CEC space would benefit from the presence of faculty offices in the same building.

## **7. Spaces Considered**

The task force has considered the following spaces:

1. First floor of ALCC.
2. Azel Backus House.
3. Rudd Health Center.

4. The Pavilion (to be enclosed).
5. A part of the Annex.
6. West Bundy Living Room.
7. Bundy Dining Hall.
8. Basement or attic of Root.
9. Campus Safety building.
10. North Court and South Court.

Many of these spaces do not meet some of the basic requirements of a CEC. Enclosing the Pavilion, using a piece of the Annex, West Bundy Living Room, Bundy Dining Hall, basement or attic of Root are undesirable options because the CEC would not be located centrally. Campus Safety building is a renovated garage and Physical Plant will likely demolish it once Campus Safety moves to Bristol. Rudd Health Center has low ceilings, still houses the Health Center for another one or two years, and does not allow for expansion. North Court and South Court will be demolished this summer.

## **8. Recommendations**

### *8.1 Recommendations for the Short-Term*

#### First Option

The task force recommends that the first floor of ALCC be renovated and expanded to accommodate the CEC. After renovation and expansion, the ALCC would meet all basic structural requirements that the task force has indentified.

- The building is centrally located on College Hill Road and close to Martin's Way and ELS.
- The building would accommodate a large community room, a kitchen, a powder room, storage space, a conference room, an office, a director office, and a resource room/computer lab, and a director office.
- The renovation and expansion of ALCC could be realized by the end of the summer.
- There is potential for expansion in the long run.
- The building already houses faculty offices.

The task force acknowledges that housing the CEC in the ALCC is a concern among some students. However, the task force believes that this option presents the most opportunities for growth for all culturally-based student organizations.

### Second Option

The task force recommends Azel Backus House as a second option. The main benefit of Azel Backus House is its central location. There is also a lounge/meeting space. There are currently two faculty apartments. The Womyn's Center will occupy one of these apartments. The other apartment could be renovated for offices and seminar rooms. The main drawback of Azel Backus House is that it would not allow for expansion in the long-run as it is "landlocked."

### *8.2 Recommendations for the Long-Term*

In the long-term, the task force has considered a CEC formed by a cluster of three buildings: the renovated ALCC, the current Career Services, and the Ferry building. The buildings could be "knitted" together via landscaping or architectural design.

According to Hamilton's building master plan for 2006 to 2016+, phase one of the master plan (2006-2010) includes the addition and renovation of Emerson Hall (ELS). The offices of Student Activities will then move to Emerson Hall. In turn, relocating other offices to Bristol would free space on campus. Campus Safety, Counseling and Health Services, and the Career Center could be moved to Bristol.

If the CEC is located in the ALCC, once Campus Safety moves to Bristol, the current Campus Safety building can be demolished allowing further expansion and/or a green area for the CEC. In addition, the building that the Career Center now occupies could become a second building for the CEC.

Phase two of the master plan (2011-2015) calls for a new Studio Arts building and the renovation of List Hall. The renovation of List Hall would allow the Computer Sciences Department to vacate the Ferry building. The Ferry building could then become a third building for the CEC. This configuration would allow for the creation of a cluster of culturally-based groups.

## 9. Additional Recommendations

The members of the task force believe there is a great sense of urgency for the creation of a CEC among many students.

- The task force recommends that Acting President Joe Urgo and the senior staff act swiftly and decisively upon the recommendations in this report and begin budget and facility planning as soon as possible.
- The task force also believes that there is a need for the development of a long-term plan that includes expansion and consolidation of the CEC.
- The task force recommends that a committee be formed to determine the mission and goals of the center, its governance, and programming.
- The task force recommends that a Director and an office assistant be hired for the CEC.
- A priority for the task force has been to make certain that the students take the lead on articulating their needs. The task force recommends that a student advisory board guide overall programming and the definition of the CEC's mission and goals.

Submitted by: Edwin Gaston '11, Denise Ghartey '12, Bill Huggins, Associate Director of Physical Plant; Lisa Magnarelli, Assistant Dean of Students for Campus Life/Director of Student Activities; Angel David Nieves, Associate Professor of Africana Studies; and Julio Videras, Acting Associate Dean of Faculty.

May 7, 2009