



THE



WELCOME



PROJECT



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Agenda

- INTRODUCTION
- PAIN POINTS
- PROPOSAL
- ACTION PLAN
- RESEARCH
- COSTS & ANALYSIS
- CHALLENGES, SOLUTIONS, PREVENTION
- CONCLUSION



Introduction





Pain Points

- **Macro:**
 - Students lack a sense of community to belong to
- **Micro:**
 - Students have few reasons to stay on campus outside of class





Third Place Dilemma

- “Third Place” is missing
- Existing spaces don’t fit social needs of students
- Bottom-up, student centered approach is needed



Step 1 - *Where?*

- Founders Lounge Revitalization
 - Cozy, welcoming furniture
 - Arranged in sections, but still open
- Designed around student behavior
- Students involved:
 - Art students paint mural
 - Biology/ecology create indoor garden
 - Psychology to analyze behavior





Warm and Inviting

- Coffee shop opened into bar-style café with stools
- Permanent stage for entertainment/events
- Warm, colorful, non-fluorescent lighting



Step 2 - *Why?*

- Unaffiliated events
 - Large-scale
 - Shows
 - Independence
- Create new Student Community Board
- Events include:
 - Movie night
 - Involvement fair
 - Night-time dance
 - Away game viewing



Action Plan



Phase 1 (fall 2025–spring 2026): approval, funding, new position created and filled, needs assessment, initial design concept drafted



Phase 2 (summer 2026–spring 2027): space selection finalized, floor plan drafted, budget approved; aesthetic features installed



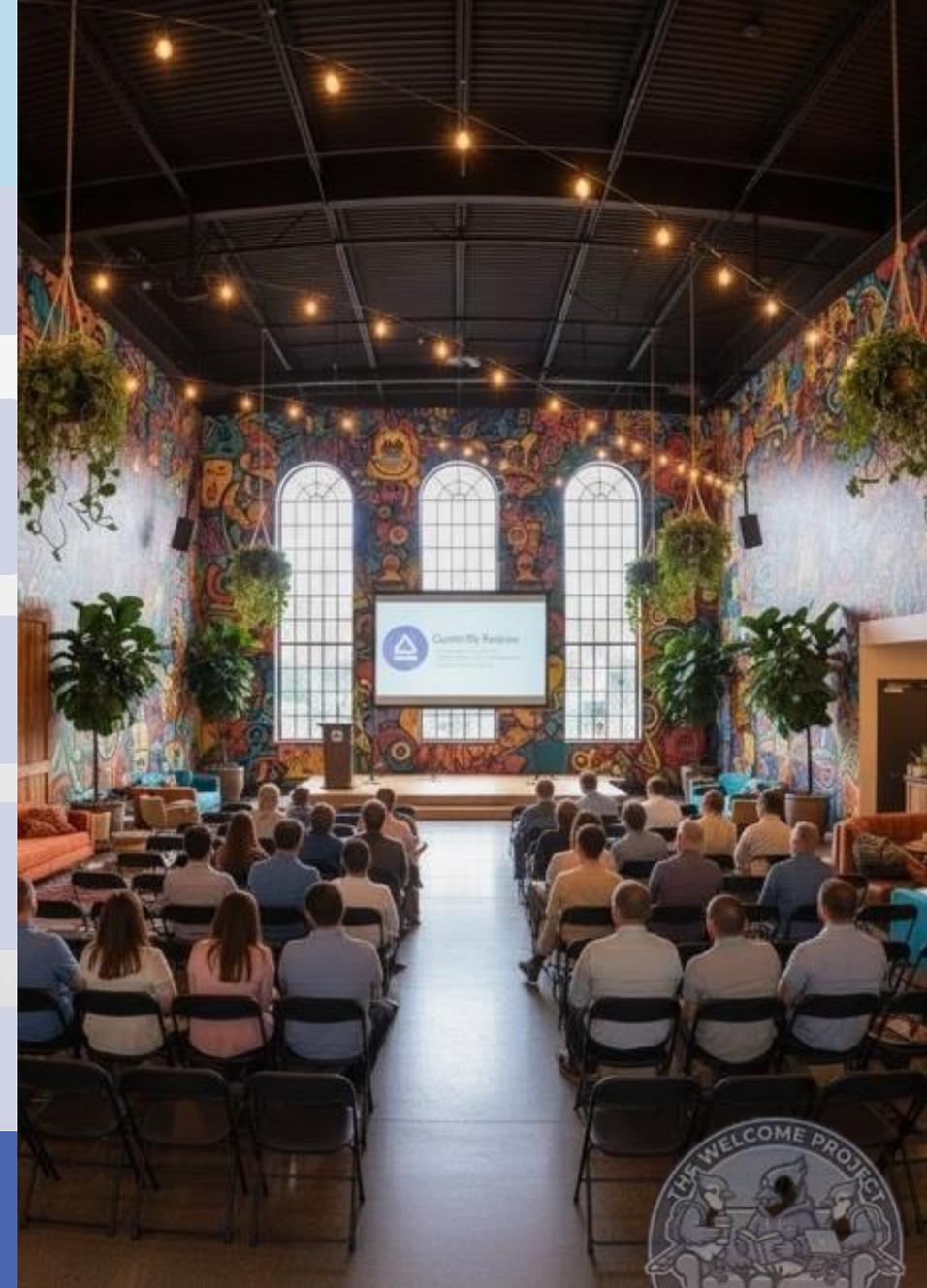
Phase 3 (summer 2027): technology installation (TVs, sound systems), café constructed, greenery installation, marketing rollout.



Phase 4 (fall 2027): grand opening event; weekly events begin to activate the lounge.



Phase 5 (spring 2028 onward): first semester review, evaluation report, and sustainability adjustments and belonging goals are met.



New Position: *Community Coordinator*

Grad Assist Position

Data	Gathering and analyzing qualitative and quantitative data, taking action on data
Budget	Managing expenses, potential revenues
Coordinate	Coordinating and schedule space use. Communicating with Facilities and IT. Coordinate furniture contracts.
Update	Updating status and schedule screens to reflect space uses
Events	Event planning and execution
Networking	Creating and maintaining relationships with local vendors and entertainment/Chartwells
Supervisory	Overseeing student run board and elections





Loyola University
Chicago's
Damen Student Center

- University of Chicago – Ex Libris café & Harper Library lounges
 - They created informal café and library lounge spaces where students can study, relax, and socialize
 - These spaces are described as “third places” that help students escape isolation, build friendships, and feel part of campus culture
- DePaul University, Loyola University, and Northern Illinois University have implemented similar ideas

Where else has this been done?



Accessibility, Culture, Inclusion, and EU Values



Accessibility considerations:

- ADA-accessible seating and layout
- Noise-level options (quiet corners & social zones)
- Neutral lighting, sensory-friendly areas

Cultural relevance & DEI alignment:

- Includes all students regardless of club affiliation or housing status
- Incorporates students' identities in décor/design

Alignment with Elmhurst University values:

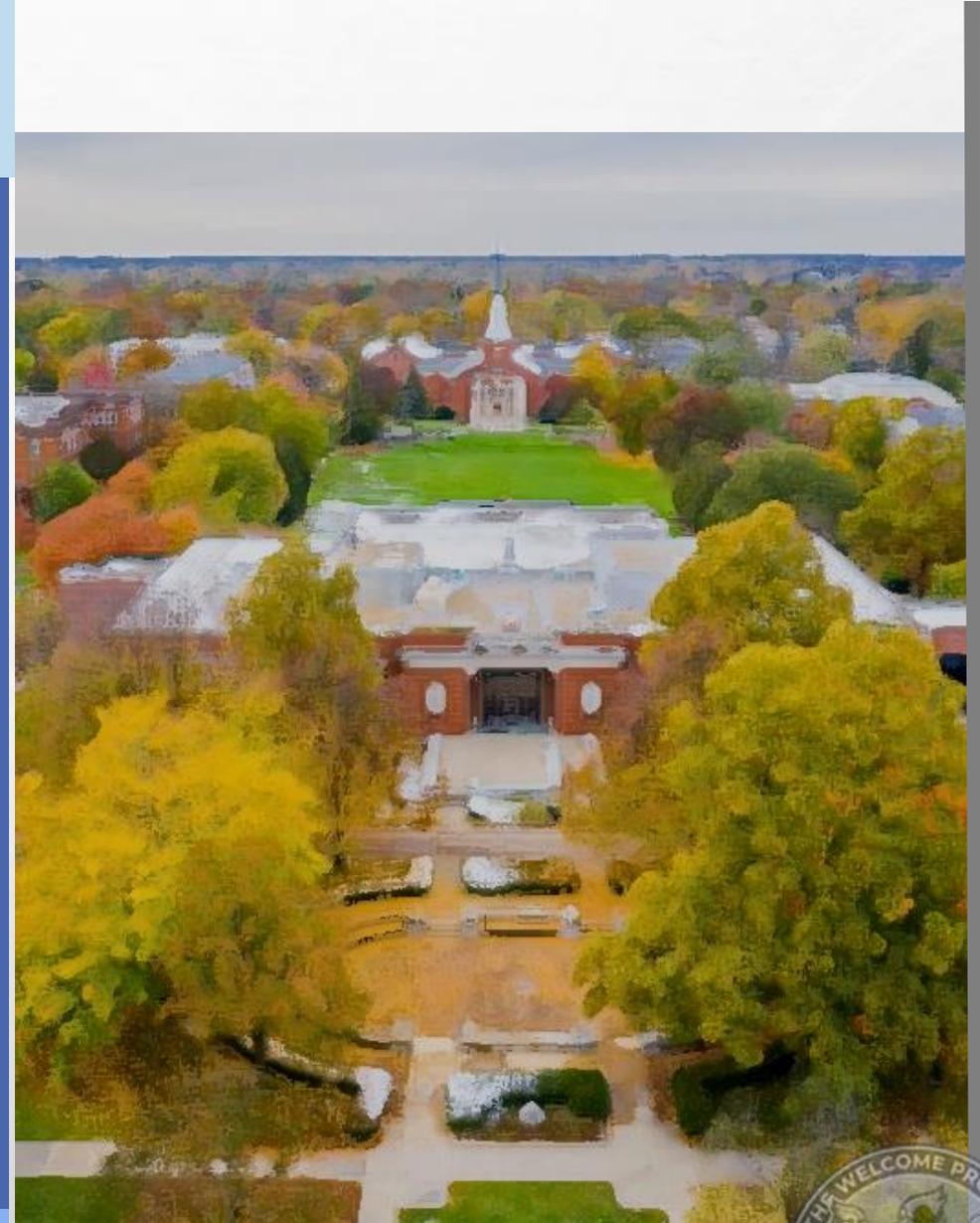
- Supports student well-being and mental health
- Enhances student engagement and belonging
- Strengthens campus culture and connections across diverse student backgrounds



Costs

- **According to Toast, coffee shop build-out:** About average at \$200,000.
- **Smart lighting system:** Above average at \$40,000
- **Media:** 4) 50" Samsung TVs are \$230/ea. Total: \$920.
- **Comfortable, stylish furniture from contract, commercial suppliers :** estimated \$55,000.
- **Minor demolition costs.** \$2-3 per square foot.

One-time costs: \$281,469



Student Type	Total Cohort	Retained (Returned)	Lost (Did not return)
Traditional Full-Time			
New Freshmen	607	488	119
New Transfers	378	321	57
Continuing (Freshman, Soph, Jr)	1,151	1,033	118
Degree Completion	64	43	21
Graduate Students	768	716	52
TOTAL	2,968	2,601	367

Between 2023 and 2024

Traditional Part-Time not included as many are non-degree seeking or high school dual-credit



Cost/Benefit Analysis

- Based on average \$34,655 revenue/student 9 retained students is over \$310,000 revenue, more than one-time costs.
- If revitalization costs applied as a fee, it would amount to \approx \$78/student for all students
- University program expense for 2023 was \$127,346,445. The program revenue was \$129,324,071.
 - If paid off using only program profit, it would take 520 retained students to justify cost



Challenges, Solutions, and Prevention

- **Challenges:**

- Low retention → major revenue loss
- No true "third place" for students
- Current spaces feel uninviting
- Limited large-scale, unifying events

- **Solutions:**

- Founders' Lounge Revamp: student-led design, murals, greenery, comfy seating, warm lighting, open café/bar
- Student Community Board: student-run social events (music, game nights, tailgates, semi-formals)
- Flexible Layout: movable furniture for multiple uses

- **Prevention:**

- Continuous student input
- Student-led programming
- Space stays flexible and student-centered



CONCLUSION



Thank You

