
CHANGEMAKERS: CREATIVITY AND VALUE CREATION

MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE OUTDOOR
SPACES WITHIN THE CARMARTHEN CAMPUS OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF WALES TRINITY SAINT DAVID

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PROBLEM STATEMENT

The lack of maintenance of the Carmarthen Campus of UWTSD has led to a lack of use of outdoor spaces by UWTSD students. The state of disrepair, most outdoor facilities are in, has made them unappealing areas in which to spend time.

I wish to bring attention to:

1. The problems caused of the students not engaging with the outdoor areas around them.
2. Why improved maintenance to the areas on campus is important.
3. How adding a purpose to the spaces on campus will increase usage.

RESEARCH

WHY OUTDOOR SPACES ARE IMPORTANT TO STUDENTS

Students are a demographic that has begun to spend increasing amounts of time inside with the increased reliance on technology for entertainment and education. The Covid-19 pandemic created the move to digital learning. We can see that video call services had an increase in users due to education having to be provided virtually. "Zoom was one of the fastest growing apps of the pandemic; meeting participants increased by 2900%" (IQBAL, 2023) This is a drastic increase in users and large amounts can be traced to universities moving online to accommodate the pandemic's restrictions.

Studies Conducted on mental health over the pandemic in France show that "Students and that prevented the working exhibited the lowest wellbeing scores" (Haesebaert, et al., 2020) Through surveys they found in this study a positive correlation between the space of the living area of the responder to the score on their mental wellbeing. "In particular, people with access to an outdoor space had higher well-being scores" (Haesebaert, et al., 2020). This shows how universities aren't providing enough outdoor spaces for students to use because if they were to have access to outdoor areas they should have scored comparatively higher on these well-being surveys.

From these studies, I moved to focus on providing appealing outdoor spaces on campus for my project, in the hopes of creating a space where the well-being and mental health of students is prioritized.

THE WAYS STUDENTS ARE CURRENTLY INTERACTING WITH THE SPACES OUTSIDE IN CARMARTHEN CAMPUS

Via reaching out to groups of students linked to the Carmarthen Campus at UWTSD, I gain responses to my survey collecting data on how the students use the outdoor areas on campus. Below shows a chart with the number of students using the Carmarthen campus outdoor areas. Over 82% of students don't currently use the outdoor areas on campus. An interesting statistic based on this is that 93.3% of those not currently using the outdoor areas on campus would like to use these spaces. This suggests that the issues don't stem from students' unwillingness to explore outdoor spaces or to be outside but the lack of spaces on campus that students enjoy.

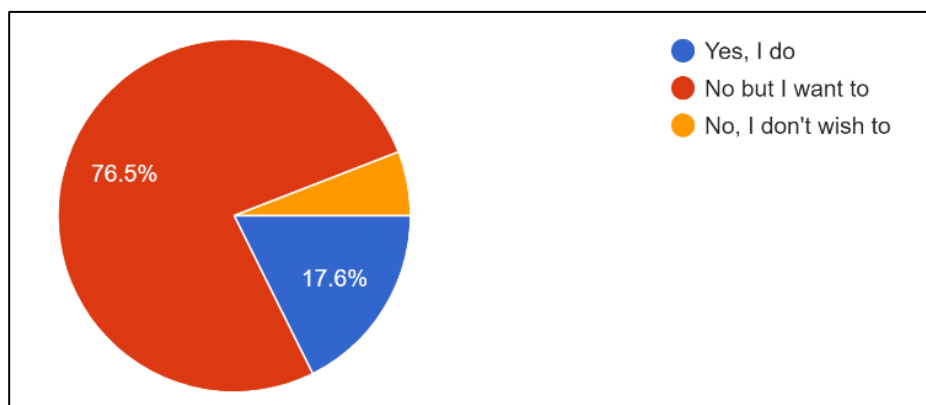


FIGURE 1: GRAPH OF RESPONSES TO DO YOU USE OUTDOOR SPACES ON THE CARMARTHEN CAMPUS?

When asked why they don't use the outdoor spaces on campus students 77% responded that "there is nowhere worth using" and 100% of respondents said that they wanted improved outdoor spaces. Here there is the opinion from the student body that they want to use outdoor spaces on campus but there is just a lack of facilities provided in these outdoor spaces. From this I wanted to have an understanding of how students would want to engage with the space around them, the majority wanted to socialise. For social spaces, you want to include tables and chairs in the space so that people can sit, talk and eat together. The idea of adding some activities in these spaces also can into consideration, so there is an additional purpose to these spaces to attract a wider range of students. However, there would be the risk that the 68.8% of students that want to use outdoor spaces for relaxation would be less inclined to use these areas, due to the potentially disruptive nature of some activities.

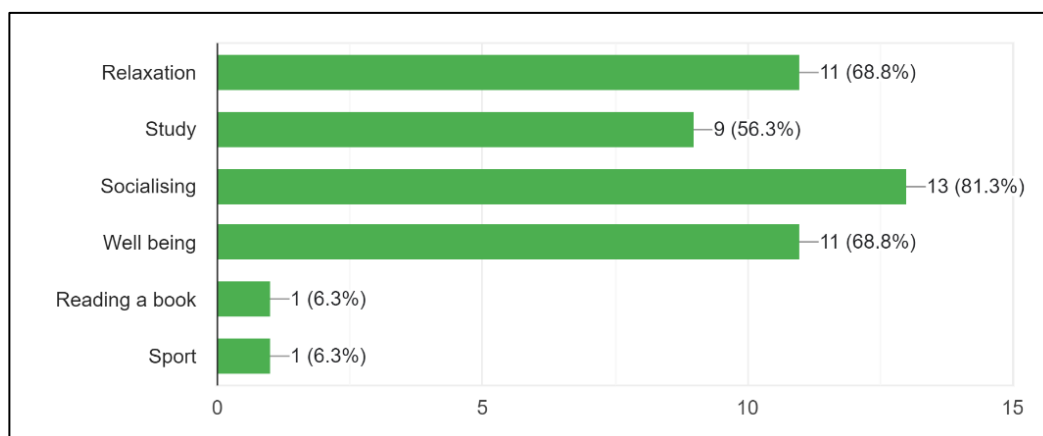


FIGURE 2: GRAPH OF RESPONSES TO WHY DO/WOULD YOU USE OUTDOOR SPACES ON CAMPUS?

Making outdoor study and relaxation areas on campus would provide students alternatives to the library to study as this and its small appendages such as the quad are the only spaces intended for extracurricular study. There is the understanding that this is a small campus compared to the majority of universities in the UK so

having fewer spaces makes sense but as shown by the responses to the survey students feel the quality of these areas aren't high enough to use. This is an issue that could be potentially solved by adding new areas to the campus that would be of a higher standard than those currently provided or improvements could be made to the areas currently around the campus.

When asked what areas students use half of the respondents have at some point visited the fountain near the library. This is a space that isn't maintained to a quality that people desire to spend their time in. When asked, "Has the condition and maintenance of the area around you ever effected negatively your experience using the space?", 56.3% of the responses were yes. This means that the majority of people would have had a more positive experience on campus if they had been maintained to higher standards.

For the area by the fountain, some aspects of maintaining it are simple cleanliness issues. The bottom of the fountain hasn't been cleaned since at least autumn. This can be seen as there are leaves from the nearby tree still present at the bottom of the water from when they fell, in autumn. Dedicating time as little as once every month to clean this space could create a more appealing space for students to spend time in. This cleaning could be carried out by, the porters, maintenance team, or a group of students willing to volunteer to help make social spaces better around campus. I have talked to students that would be willing to help clean small sections of campus so that they and others would be able to enjoy this space better.

NOTICEABLE CHANGES MADE BY THE UNIVERSITY

Over the past year of living on campus, there has only been one noticeable change in the outdoor spaces on campus. This is the addition of a few wooden gazebos on campus. These have been added in an attempt to provide outdoor seating and shelter around campus. This, in theory, is good as students want new spaces to socialise but in reality, there are very few students that are using these additions.

One of these gazebos was added to the field behind Arch Bishop Noakes 3 and 4. I have a view of this gazebo from my flat (figure 1). The placement of it is just in the middle of the field. There was no attempt to make this into a large social area or blend it into the surrounding area. This has just created another space on campus that students aren't interested in using. I and other people who have similar vantage points of this space on campus have only ever seen one group of people use this space since students returned to campus in September. This group is the Medieval Society, the only group to have utilised this field before and after the addition of the gazebos. This group, of approximately 10 students, meets roughly once every 2 weeks in this location. This means that 0.66% of the student population on this campus uses the space fortnightly (based on statistics from the [UWTSD website](#)). This is a significantly low result of users, especially if taking into consideration how few spaces are available to the Carmarthen campus students.



FIGURE 3: PHOTOGRAPH OF GAZEBO IN FIELD BEHIND ABN 4 AND 3

When asked if they had noticed the addition of the Gazebos to campus 100% responded yes. In fig 4, the survey proposed a Likert scale of how useful these gazebos are received overall negative results about the new additions.

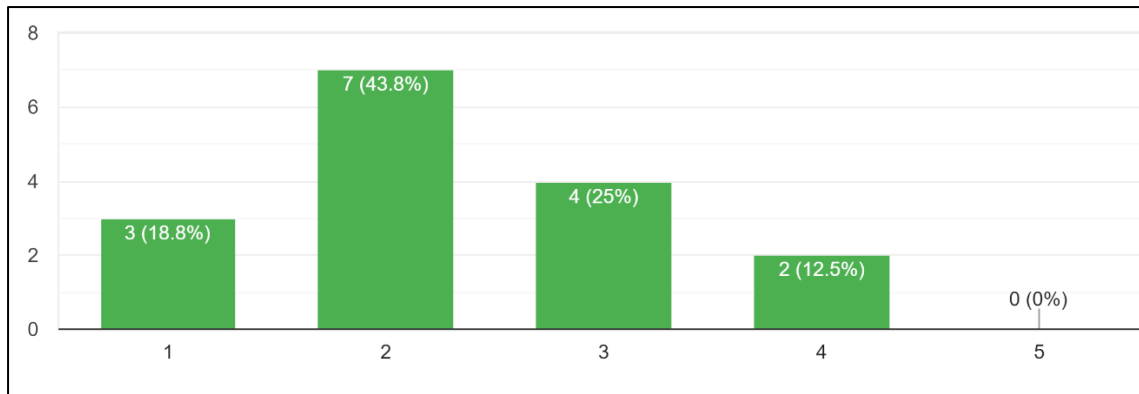


FIGURE 4: GRAPH OF RESPONSES TO DO YOU THINK THE GAZEBOS ARE OF USE?

From the reception to these Gazebos I can tell that creating an environment and not just fulfilling a purpose is important when considering implementing the new areas. These gazebos are an example of providing shelter and seating but not considering how people already use this space. I know that students want shelter as when asked for a suggestion of what they would want improving multiple responded that they wanted shelter and seating intended for socialising outside in a variety of weather conditions.

PROPOSAL CONCLUSION

I propose that the area with the fountain near the Library is redesigned and made into a relaxation and study area for students to use freely. This area has been chosen as a target area as this is a space that most students are aware of and have visited so will be more likely to be interacted with. Also, it's located close to the library which will mean students in the library will be made aware of this alternative area as they will see it through the large glass windows of the library if they wish to use it instead of the library.

This area should build on the pre-existing feature of this area. Firstly focusing on, the fountain would be cleaned regularly. Also, it would be partially rebuilt to either accommodate better fountains, making this area a visually more impressive area with a relaxing water feature instead of its current singular spurt or to have the fountains removed and to be made into a pond that could hold wildlife.

The shelter would be added to the areas around the fountain with seating. Some seating would be arranged in groups of 6 around tables, this provides space for students to socialize and work in groups but also a table could also be used by students working individually for them to work. Alternative seating would also be provided, this would be nearer to the water feature and be arranged in benches looking at the feature. This would also be covered by the shelter. The intended purpose would be for students to come and relax watching the water feature or sit and potentially read a book from the library nearby or have a coffee from the Costa also located nearby.

This area would be used as one conveniently on campus located nearby important areas of campus and provide the space with a purpose. A focus on the building of a public space that is a communal area and not an individual seating area will make students more inclined to use this space.

FEEDBACK

Presenting this idea to my peers has resulted in mostly positive feedback. They were in the majority of the students that didn't use the outdoor spaces on campus, when asked if they would use a space like I have proposed they were excited by the idea of a space intended for community interaction and socialization on campus. They liked that they could use this space to study or to relax throughout the year. Providing shelter was important to them as they want to have spaces they can go even if the weather is dismal on campus.

One suggestion made was if the idea of the socializing aspect of the space may take away from those studying. Potentially adding times of the day when this area has unique purposes would be important to keep it as useful as possible to a range of students. The main issue I found with this is that some students would feel isolated if they were wanting to use the space and then refused as they don't intend to use it for its current role. I think leaning into the social aspect of this area would be more beneficial to the community of students on campus. Socialising is extremely important to students' well-being, especially since most have been removed from their social circles back home. As I wanted to focus on the effects of well-being on students having this as a social hub with relaxation features will be the most beneficial for students.

One peer told me as I talked about the spaces available on campus he was unaware of all areas I mentioned because of this I want to also propose promoting this space throughout the year. Potentially it could be used for events during freshers' week to bring student awareness of it being an available area to use and then have special events continue through the year. Alternatively, there could be handbooks given to students when joining the campus telling them of the places they could use on campus and their purposes so they can begin using these areas from the start of the year instead of finding out through chance.

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