

# THE UNIVERSITY STAR

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## Consulting Firms Planning, Seeking Input for Student Center Renovation

By Kacee Letbetter

Photo by: Alexandra White



*Design principal Christopher Carvell and Mason Murphy, associate director of Career Services, discuss future plans for a large-scale expansion of the LBJ Student Center April 15.*

Planning is underway for renovations and expansion to the LBJ Student Center as consultants look to students for input on the changes.

Jack Rahmann, LBJ Student Center director, said consultants from an architectural firm are holding a series of meetings and taking surveys to understand the needs of students, guests and

staff who use the student center. As enrollment continues to increase, the age of the building has become more apparent, Rahmann said.

"We are taking a two-phase approach," Rahmann said. "First, we need to find out what the building needs, and then how it should grow."

Two firms are involved in the university's expansion planning process for the student center, said Peter Isaac, senior project manager at Brailsford & Dunlavey program management firm.

"The university has grown tremendously," Isaac said. "With that growth and with the mission and direction of the campus, the university is basically starting to have some pretty significant space constraints in this building."

Isaac said the firms are providing the opportunity for students to give their input by setting up in the second floor of the LBJ Student Center in front of Wells Fargo. The firms are displaying images that pertain to the project and allowing students to interact with different concepts and voice their needs, Isaac said.

"What students are looking for is what they call the 'living room to the campus,'" Isaac said.

Students are asking for more choices of food services in LBJ, said Christopher Carvell, design principal at Page, one of the architectural firms. Students want healthy options along with the ability to study, collaborate in interesting spaces and navigate the building in a more open and creative way, Carvell said.

Joanna Yaghooti, senior associate and sustainable design specialist at Page, said students also say they want longer food service hours.

Similar enhancements have been made to other facilities for many of the same reasons, Isaac said.

"I think the university is taking a holistic approach to student life," Carvell said. "There is a fairly new recreation center, the university is deliberately building new student housing and now they are pulling it all together with the student center."

The firms have meetings scheduled through the end of this academic year and will continue reaching out to students, Isaac said. At that point, they will work with administration on "synthesizing" the data, he said.

Recommendations for what needs to be achieved should be formed by early summer, Rahmann said. The university can then move forward to budgeting for the project.