

Turning 'Plant into student space will get it out of vegetative state

GRAHAM
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“Forget serving alcohol, as that can be done by any bar with a keg and a tap. Instead, focus on something a bar can't do: provide quality student space in the centre of campus. Developing this unique niche should be the focus of effort—not continued grappling with a bear market of student drinking.”

I haven't done a thorough investigation into what Michael Janz and the Students Union Executive Committee are planning for the Powerplant's next incarnation, but that doesn't change the fact that there's a model that would work for the under-used space: joint University/Students' Union student space.

If you need to be persuaded, then look at the evidence: our current SUB is a co-operative endeavour between the University and the Students' Union. It's the most bustling building on campus, turns serious profit with its current business portfolio, and houses nearly all of the important student services. Contrast this with the Powerplant, a bar / restaurant / music venue with little traffic and even less revenue.

As proof of the possibilities, witness South Lab. Just north from the Powerplant and of similar architectural vintage, South Lab will soon be unveiled as the hub of graduate student space on campus. Its location is great, it has a renovation design that's thoughtful and modern, and it fills a real need: to give graduate students functional space on campus to call their own. It's also a joint venture—just as I'm proposing for the Powerplant—with the Graduate Students' Association as the non-University partner.

Clearly the Powerplant is in need of a drastic change. Campus social trends have shifted in the years since the Powerplant's profitability. The

management team, while dealt the responsibility of operating a successful operation, should not be a target of blame for the lack of recent success. The entire market dynamic of campus bars has altered, so to expect SU management to buck the trend and turn profits in an unworkable context is unfair.

With the responsibility of operating a successful venture comes the real and exciting possibility to remake the Powerplant into a valuable part of the campus. Forget serving alcohol, as that can be done by any bar with a keg and a tap. Instead, focus on something a bar can't do: provide quality student space in the centre of campus. Developing this unique niche should be the focus of effort—not continued grappling with a bear market of student drinking.

The SU should forge a partnership with the University to develop the space into SUB East. The end goal has to be kept in mind here, which is providing students with value. The recent round of tweaks and tinkering can't create the changes needed to the 'Plant, but partnering with the University could. After all, South Lab would still be an oversized storage closet if the GSA had decided to try and revamp it alone.

The new model shouldn't be a cookie-cutter copy of SUB because it has a different geography, both physical and social. What it should do is draw on the principle of pragmatism that SUB has proven to be successful.

Students want to be able to come and go, to mix and mingle, so open up the architecture and increase the natural light. They want to study, to take a break, and to meet up with friends, so create a variety of different spaces. They'll need coffee, maybe even food, but students are a bit impatient and are used to queuing, so let them go get the food instead of making them wait for it to come to them.

This general model is already available in SUB, but it's bursting at the seams. Undergraduate enrollment continues to grow, which means that student space should be keeping pace. SUB is also prohibitively far away if you spend most of your time east of Cameron Library, but the location of the Powerplant is ideal for stretching these geographical limitations.

Of course, as partners in the venture, the University should be able to make claims on business interests of their own, and the SU should, by all means, be pragmatic and strive to make it tick. After all, it wouldn't be a partnership if both sides didn't give and take: as SUB has shown, this model can work very well.

It may not happen overnight, as the University may need some convincing and students may have to wait while the necessary funding is put in place. However, the concept of SUB East has real value for students, and that should make it the clear favourite over a revamped watering hole.

Don't discriminate: old men need love too

PAUL
KNOECHEL

wouldn't sleep with him. What does he need to do, buy her a pearl necklace?

The worst part of this all is the reasoning behind the rejection: Eden's age. That's right: she didn't want to sleep with him because he was a mere 58 years older than her. This is why Eden is the hero of heroes: he's suing the woman on the basis of age discrimination, or “ageism”—and you're damn right he should! It's not like he's hobbling along with a seeing-eye dog running on the train all day. Maybe he's no Spider-Man or Houdini, but who would be at his age?

This really has the potential to snowball until women get so picky that they're turning men down for things like being poor or ugly, having misogynistic attitudes or bad hygiene, or just being too fucking real.

The point is that if women can decide not to sleep with someone this rich based on their age, they can sure as hell start turning the rest of us down

for all sorts of reasons. This really has the potential to snowball until women get so picky that they're turning men down for things like being poor or ugly, having misogynistic attitudes or bad hygiene, or just being too fucking real.

Not only is the fairer sex going to start demanding that the people they sleep with lack certain qualities, but they're going to want them to possess certain other traits as well. They'll be searching for things like gourmet cooks—someone who can whip up a fancy open-faced sandwich, regional fare (like a Boston pancake), and hoity-toity deserts. I don't know if you've tried to make a double-stuffed Arizona Oreo, but it's a pain in the ass.

We've got to get off this path like a cowboy off a bucking bronco so women don't expect some macho man that can play five-on-one pool in the bar or be some genius who understands the physics of space docking—I have enough trouble wrapping my head around regular docking as it is. We've all got to fight for the right of a pervy old man to sleep with someone way out of their league because it gives hope to us all.

Now, I must be off. I have my second date with Linda, and I'm pretty sure that I can talk her into a Birmingham booty call. I figure if she turns me down, I can always sue her.

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