



Imagining the Next 100 Years

# Memorial Union Reinvestment Fact Sheet

## From the Wisconsin Union

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**FACT:** The student/Theater lounge addition is designed to serve two functions: student lounge space and Theater lobby and concession space. It will be used for concessions only immediately before, during and after Theater events.

**FICTION:** The Theater lounge and sunset deck are designed to be corporate skyboxes for weddings and private events.

**In fact, Union Council, the student-majority governing board of the Union, voted on an official procedure outlining guidelines and setting restrictions for the usage of the student/Theater lounge space in their meeting on October 5, 2011. Read the official document here.**



The student/Theater lounge will be open whenever the building is open and will serve primarily as student lounge space. The Theater concession space is designed to service beverages and appetizers, but is not suitable for hosting banquet meals such as wedding dinners (that

was discussed early in the design process but dropped). There is not adequate support space or bathrooms to host these types of events, even with a service elevator.

**FICTION:** The student/Theater lounge addition will block the view of the sunset from the Terrace

**FACT:** Detailed studies indicate that an expansion would minimally affect the view and will not cast shadows on the Terrace seating. Rather, the addition would allow views of the lake and the sunsets to be enjoyed year-round.

The view from the east is already blocked by the five-story Union Theater and the Helen C. White building, which dwarf the size of the proposed student/Theater lounge. Studies by architects show the student/Theater lounge will have little to no impact on the view of the sunset and on shading on the Terrace. Projections show that the Terrace would be shaded about thirty to forty-

**five minutes earlier than otherwise, during two or three weeks (approximately April and October) of the year.**

**A local solar consultant who studied this for a group that opposes the addition concurs with the architects' results on sunset and shading after he reviewed the most current designs.**

**FICTION:** The student/Theater lounge will take up 25% of the current Terrace outdoor space and reduce seating.

**FACT:** The project will actually add 2500 square feet to the Terrace and increase seating.

The current design includes plans for an upper Terrace deck above the student/Theater lounge addition. The deck would be open and accessible for all Union members and guests to enjoy incredible views of the lake and music stage, which is a vast improvement over the current deck above the Theater lobby. The current Theater deck has wonderful views of the lake, but it is inaccessible to people who cannot use stairs, difficult to find, and is rarely used because of security issues. Additionally, the new design includes plans to connect most of the decks at this level so there will be a continuous, accessible route for guests to enjoy different parts of the upper Terrace.

**Seating to the north of the student/Theater lounge will be preserved and seating to the east of the addition will be added. Accessibility to both seating areas will be improved so more Union members, including students, can enjoy the space.**

**FICTION:** Students did not vote for a lounge addition in the 2006 referendum.

**FACT:** The student lounge addition was a prominent part of the referendum campaign, including renderings of the lounge in the same location as the current proposal.

Links to artist renderings clearly indicating a "lake view lounge" were included within the verbiage of the referendum. These renderings were available online, on bulletin boards, flyers and other promotional

materials, and were a part of every presentation made to registered student organizations and campus and community groups. A poster has been displayed in the Hooper lounge since 2006 until this day. See initial presentation materials here.



Perhaps more important to understand is that referenda are never meant to be a literal approval of every detail of a design. Architectural renderings are only concepts and do not become final designs until the budget is approved. For example, the renderings for Union South are different

from the actual building and the Student Activity Center referendum included a stand-alone building on a different site than where the SAC was eventually constructed.

FICTION: The referendum failed two, three, or four times before it passed.

FACT: One referendum failed, in April 2005, for a different plan at a different fee level.

The April 2005 referendum had higher seg fees and proposed to renovate the old Union South, instead of constructing a new one. The Memorial Union plan was also substantially different. Because it was a relatively close vote, Union leaders surveyed students to better determine what they wanted. Surveys and market research showed the referendum failed primarily because it would renovate the old Union South, as opposed to replacing it with a better one.

Voter turnout for the new referendum in spring 2006 was larger than the system could handle and crashed the online voting system. DoIT and ASM could not guarantee that all votes were counted and only counted once, therefore ASM postponed the referendum until fall 2006. The fall 2006 referendum to building a new south union and renovate Memorial Union passed by a nearly two-to-one margin.

FICTION: Students/faculty/staff/alumni and Union members have not been actively involved in the design process

FACT: More than 11,000 students/faculty/staff/alumni/Union members have participated in surveys, open forums, tours, focus groups, and advisory groups for this project. Students have a majority on the two bodies--design committee and Union Council--charged with

making final design decisions on the building project.

FICTION: The proposed student/Theater lounge bar is 30 ft. long and is larger than the Stiftskeller bar.

FACT: A temporary bar will be used in the student/Theater lounge to support theater concession during Theater events and it is designed to only be 19 ft. long.

This is less than half of the size of the Stiftskeller bar, which is 48 linear ft. The Theater concession bar is also designed as three individual moveable pieces which will be removed when not used.

FICTION: The Wisconsin State Historical Society (WSHS) mandated the size of the expansion.

FACT: The WSHS reacts to the designs presented to them based on standards set by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior and does not dictate the size of the addition.

The addition size is a response to the shortage of student lounge and Theater lobby space. Student survey results showed that students strongly desired more lounge space and Theater industry standards indicate that the Union Theater should have an additional 4,000 square feet of lobby space. The 3,100 square foot student/Theater lounge will better meet those needs.

FICTION: The Union will ask for an increase in student fees to support Phase 2 of the building project.

FACT: The referendum approved in 2006 covers both constructing Union South and renovating Memorial Union. If there was a need to increase student fees for a Union building project that would have to go to vote on an ASM ballot.



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