

Expand the Center for Academic Excellence

With physical distancing guidelines in place across the University, the expansion of the Center for Academic Excellence into the Ballou Library is welcomed with even more enthusiasm. In its new location, the CAE will nearly double in physical space and triple the amount of spacing for students to test.

“In our current space, students spill into the hallway because of the lack of space,” says Donna Musel, Director of the Center for Academic Excellence. “We have three designated spaces for testing and squeezed in two more, for five spaces total. This was not an ideal area for students to work.”

With the renovation of the Library nearing completion, the CAE has already begun to use the space and plans for the completion of their move-in in the coming weeks. This new space allows students who are studying in the library to have more seamless access to both the CAE and IT, which is also being relocated to Ballou Library. In its new space, if the CAE reaches capacity, students can utilize the Library space as well.

The relocation of the CAE also includes the addition of a sensory room. This room is designed for students on the Autism Spectrum Disorder and those with high anxiety. The space will include a rocking chair, fidget devices, weighted blankets, music capabilities, and special lights. Students can use the sensory room as a place to decompress after a stressful, frustrating situation or in anticipation for an event such as a tough exam or social circumstance.

While expanded space will make physical distancing easier, there are still many other precautions taking place in accordance with COVID-19 guidelines.

“Our sensory room is designed to be a high-touch place, and we will be working out how we can safely use this space in the coming weeks,” says Musel. “We will continue to offer tutoring online through Zoom and also plan to utilize outdoor spaces while the weather is nice. We will ensure that face-to-face tutoring is done in the safest manner possible.”

To better serve students, the CAE has paired up with Mike Walker’s Strategic Initiative on retention, to help students who have been identified through the early alert program and those on academic probation. With a larger space, the CAE will be prepared to handle a larger bandwidth of students ranging from athletic study groups to individuals and small groups all at once.

Short term, the goal is to offer a larger and better used space for students to have access to the services the CAE offers including areas for students who prefer to talk openly and collaborate and rooms for those who wish to study in a quiet space where they can focus. Long term, the goal is to expand staff, bring faculty back for office hours, and offer test rooms for professional and pre-professional exams such as the GRE.

“We have all this potential with a new space. In our previous space, it was hard to imagine new services because there wasn’t space to imagine them,” says Musel. “We want to meet the needs

of our students, and once we get rolling in our new space, we can explore what other services our students can use.”

The CAE will soon be settled into its new space and available to students, offering new opportunities and new ways to reach them and aid them in their success at BVU and beyond.

Initiative Description:

1. Increase CAE staff to include an assistant director of the CAE, a 2nd part-time math (STEM) position, and two additional staff where needed in Phase 2 (technology person, proctor, life coach, an admin. asst. or whatever positions are more needed).
2. Include CAE space (Phase 2 Fall 2020).

Success Metric: Students report increased satisfaction with CAE space for learning, studying, and working with CAE staff & peers. Surveys and Accudemia reports show increased use of CAE -> increased academic engagement. Students on academic probation who follow contract requirements show increased GPA over students who do not follow contract requirements.

Initiative Owner: Director of the Center for Academic Excellence

Cabinet Sponsor: Provost