

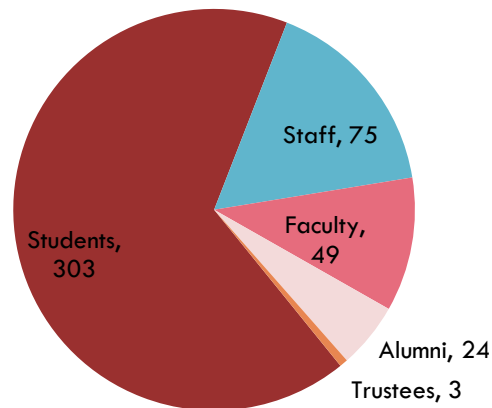
# Learning Commons Survey Report

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## Survey Respondents

We invited those affiliated with the Northwestern College – students, staff, faculty, alumni, and trustees – to participate in an online survey about the proposed plans for the learning commons. Invitations were issued via e-mail. The survey consisted of 11 questions; no question was required, and not all respondents answered every question. The survey was open from April 21, 2010 through May 8, 2010.

We received 454 completed responses, categorized into the following groups:

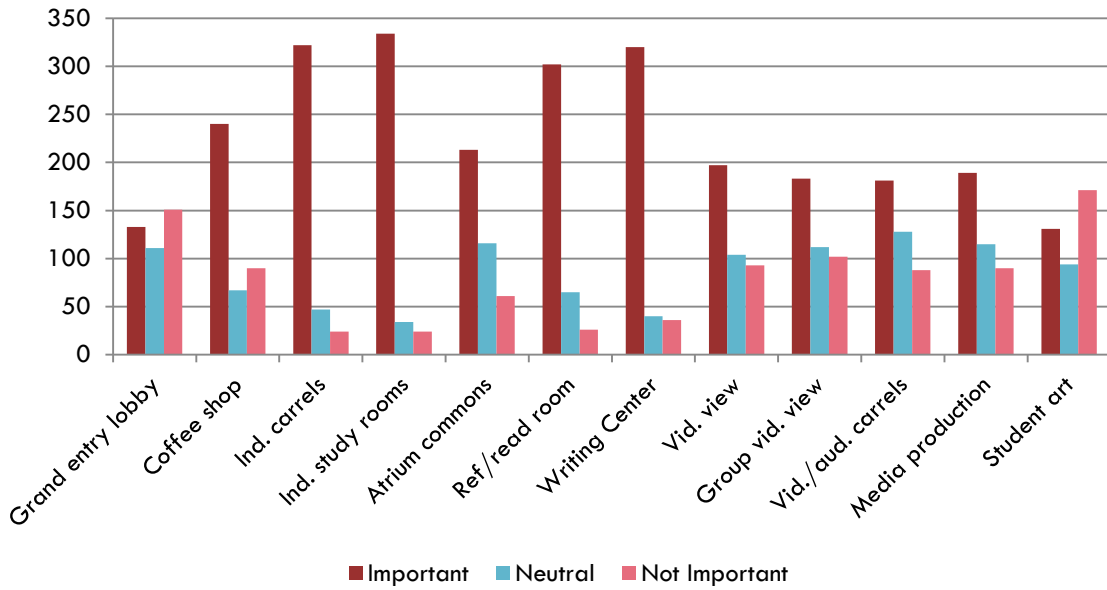


## Overall Importance of Features

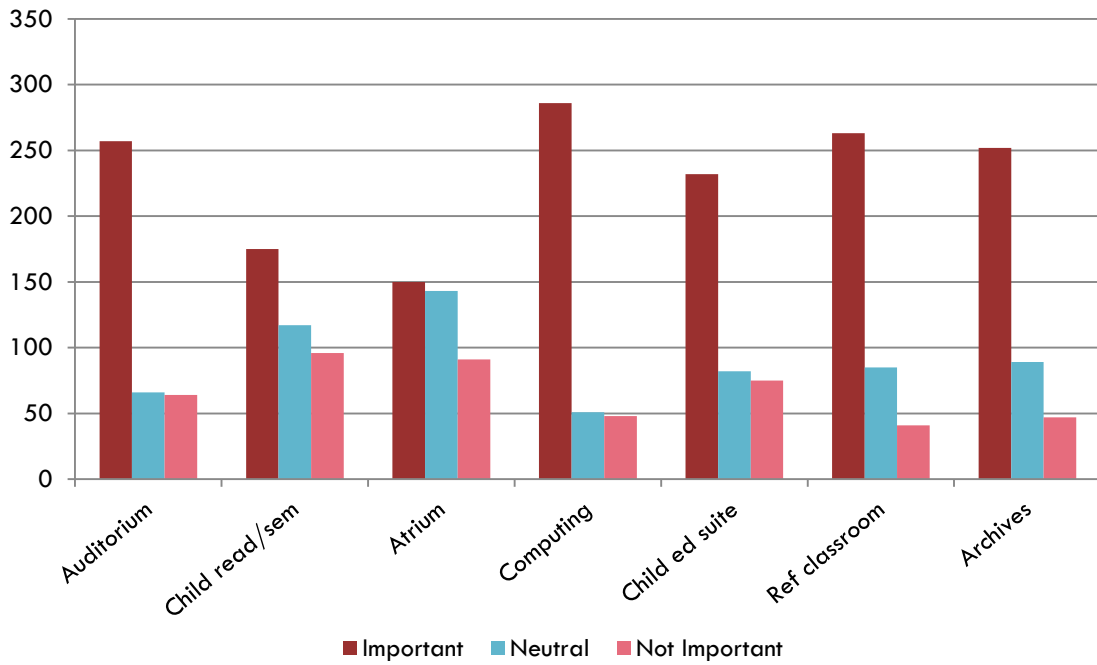
The survey was structured by floors; respondents were asked to rate the importance of each floor's features; drawings of each floor were included for reference. Respondents also had space to include comments about those features.

Looking at just the overall results, it would seem that the campus community wants almost every feature proposed; every item except the grand lobby entry and the student art gallery received more positive responses than negative. However, it's important to look at the data further, comparing well-supported features with those less-supported, seeing how different constituencies view different features, and noting uncertainty and indifference about features by the number of "neutral" and "less important" responses.

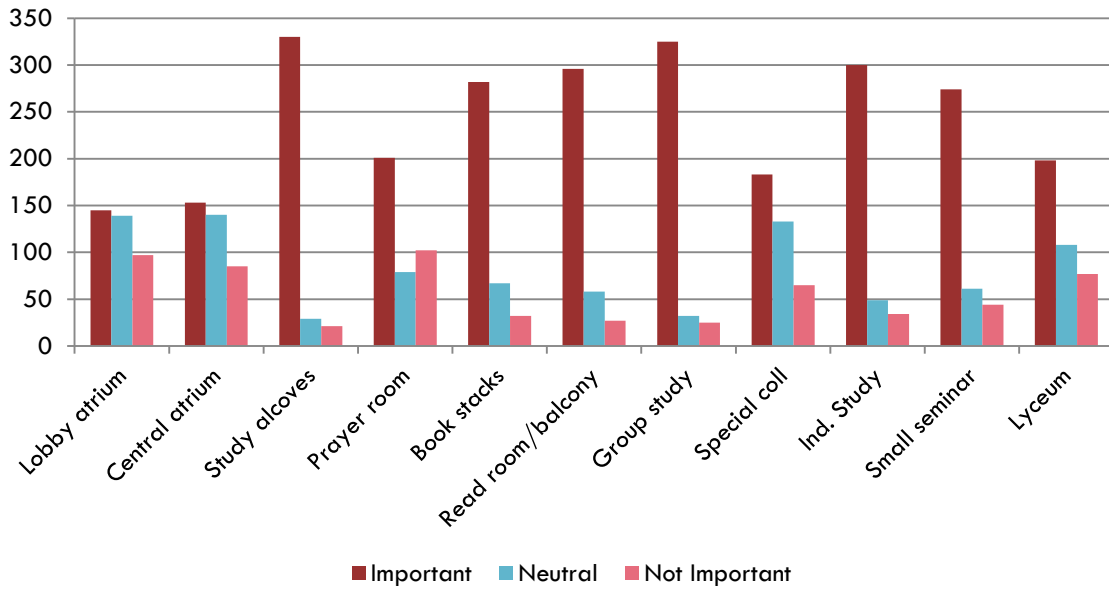
**Importance of All Main Level Features by Total Respondents**



**Importance of All Lower Level Features by Total Respondents**



**Importance of All Upper Level Features by Total Respondents**



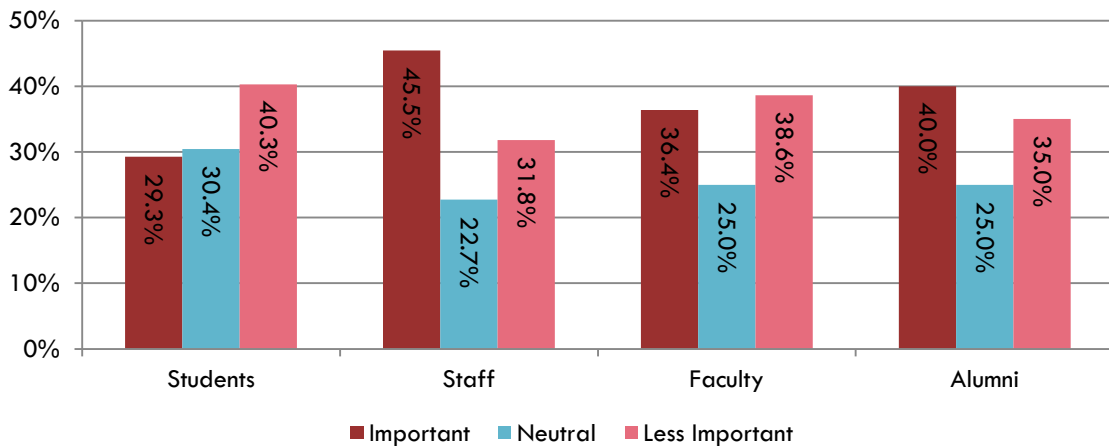
**Importance of Specific Features**

Because students comprised a majority of the respondents, their opinions greatly influenced the overall totals. For that reason, reactions to specific features at times need to be broken out by constituency in order to see who supports such items.

**Style vs. Substance**

A number of responses indicate that constituents are interested in the learning commons being a practical, functional place, not a place of showiness or excess. Features that hinted of grandeur seemed to rate as less important. For example, a larger percentage of respondents felt the grand entry lobby was unimportant:

**Importance of Grand Entry Lobby**



Comments would attest to this as well. No comments recommended incorporating new features or additional space, while 48 specifically mentioned reducing certain spaces and 16 advised trimming the entrance and lobby areas.

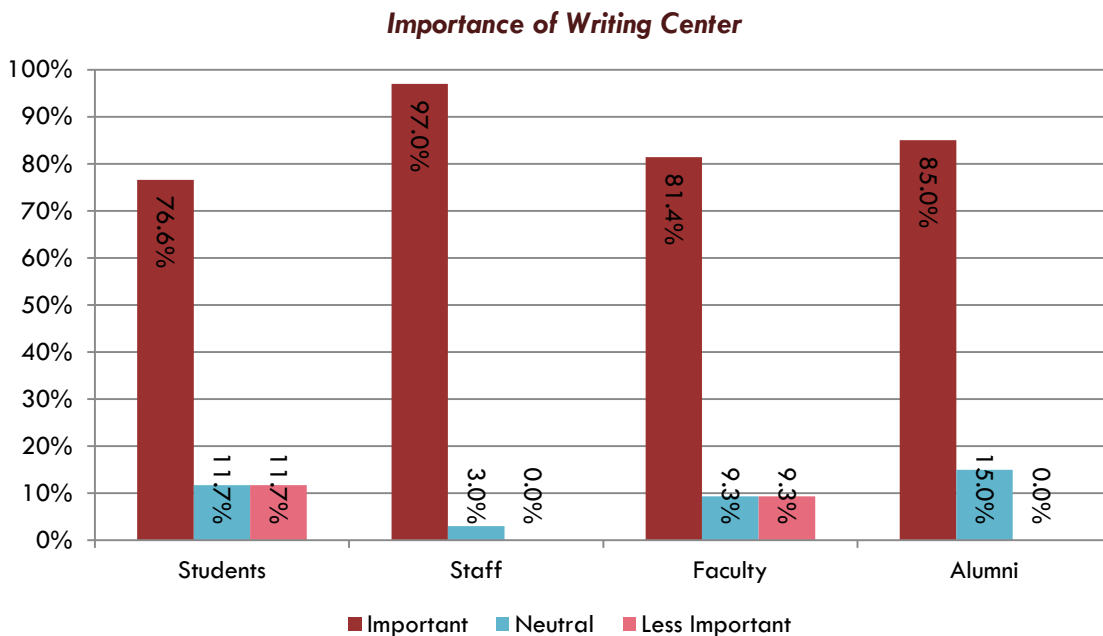
**Reading, Writing, & Studying**

Overall, responses indicate that study and learning are important goals of learning commons’ visitors. Main level individual study rooms and individual carrels were viewed as important by over 80% of respondents, regardless of constituency.

Having a number of different study space options also seems to be a priority. In addition to individual, private study areas, features such as study alcoves and group study spaces ranked high on people’s priorities. The student survey conducted in the fall of 2008 supports this as well; in that survey, 63% of respondents indicated they were assigned group projects 1-2 times each semester, and an additional 22% said they had group projects 3 or more times each semester.

Likewise, even in this technological age, books continued to be ranked as important, and reference services and materials also garnered positive support.

A large majority of respondents felt that the Writing Center, currently located in Van Peurse Hall, would be a desirable addition to the learning commons. In fact, some comments recommended expanding this area and including all academic support services here.



**Multimedia**

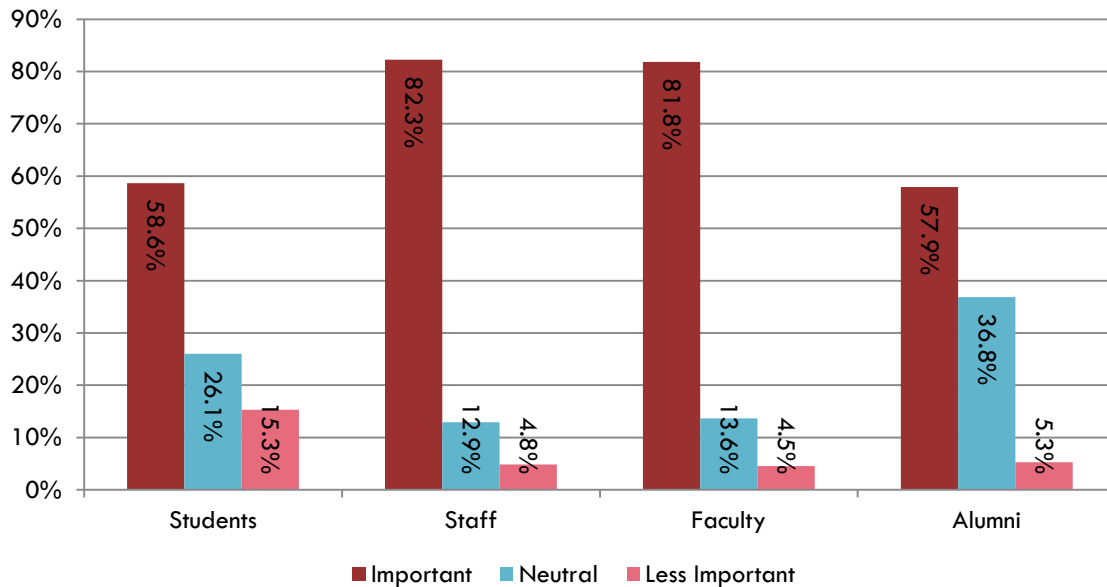
The proposed learning commons plans included a number of different media production and viewing areas. While overall these are viewed positively, they do

not generate the number of positive reactions as other features noted above. Also, at least 10 comments recommended reducing the amount of space dedicated to multimedia purposes. In other words, while multimedia capabilities are important to users of the learning commons, they may not be as important as once thought.

### ***Special Collections and Archives***

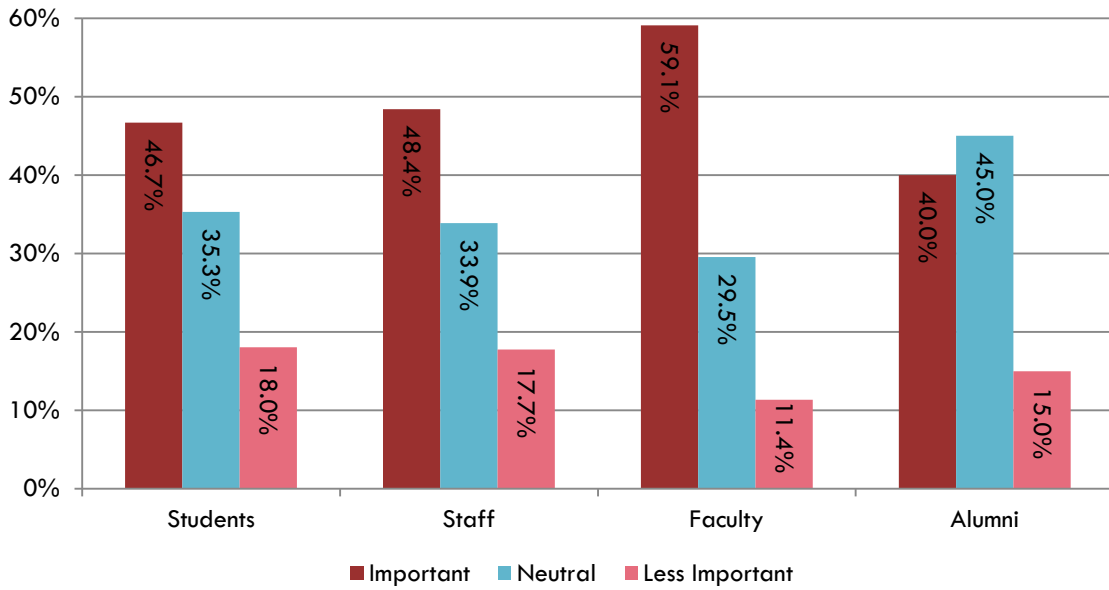
Special collections and archives have more limited appeal than other proposed features, and the survey responses indicate that. Those more familiar with these collections, such as faculty and staff, are largely supportive.

***Importance of Lower Level Special Collections & Archives***



The proposed special collections suite on the upper level did not receive as much endorsement, even from faculty and staff. Respondents did suggest locating these two areas together, rather than separating them by the main level.

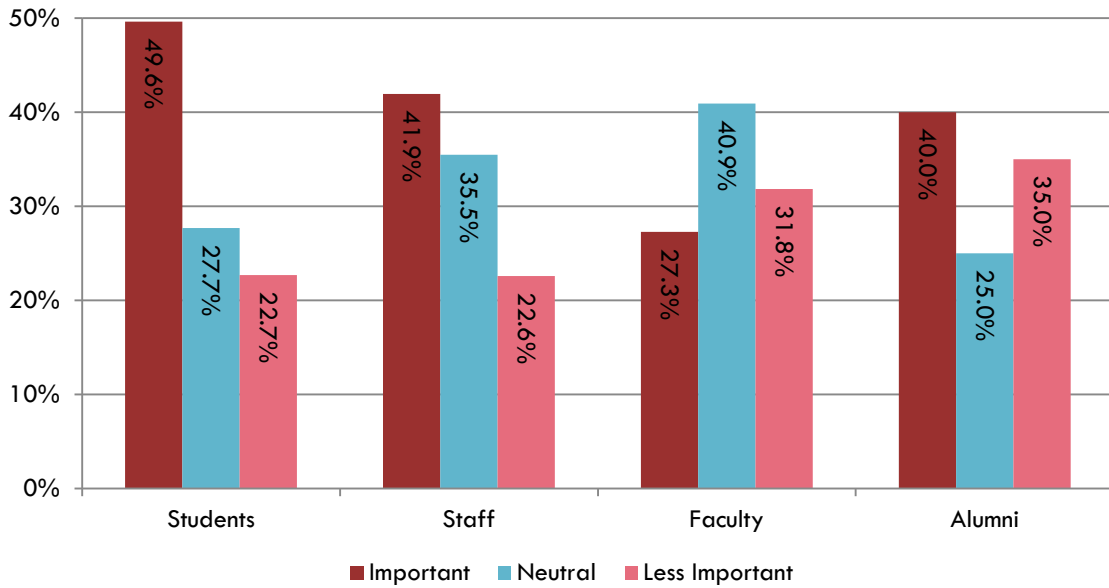
**Importance of Upper Level Special Collections Suite**



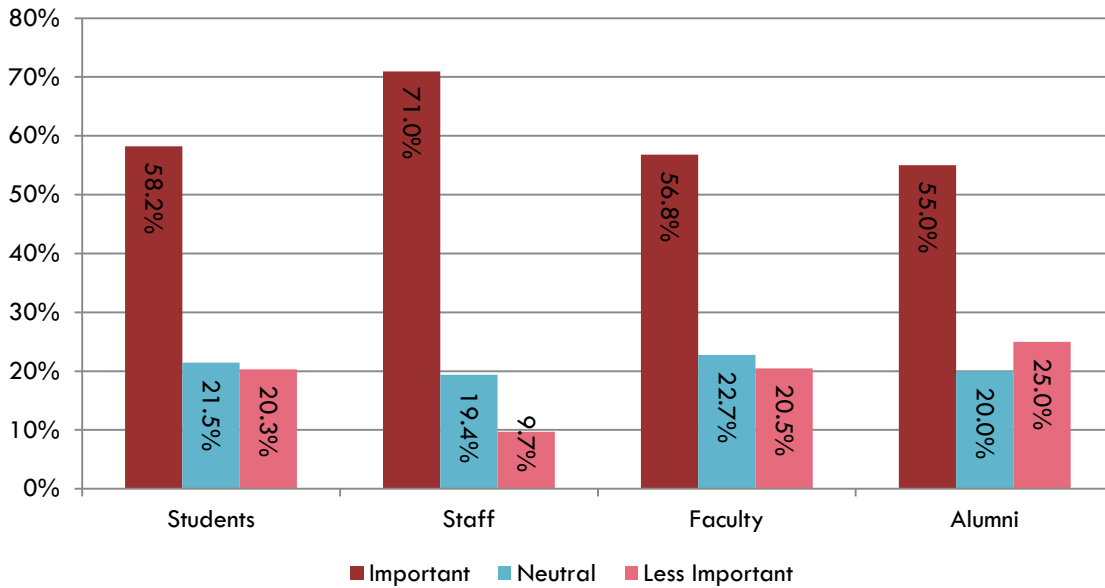
**Children's Collections**

No constituency showed majority support (over 50%) for a children's reading and seminar room, yet the children's education resources suite did have greater appeal.

**Importance of Lower Level Children's Reading and Seminar Room**



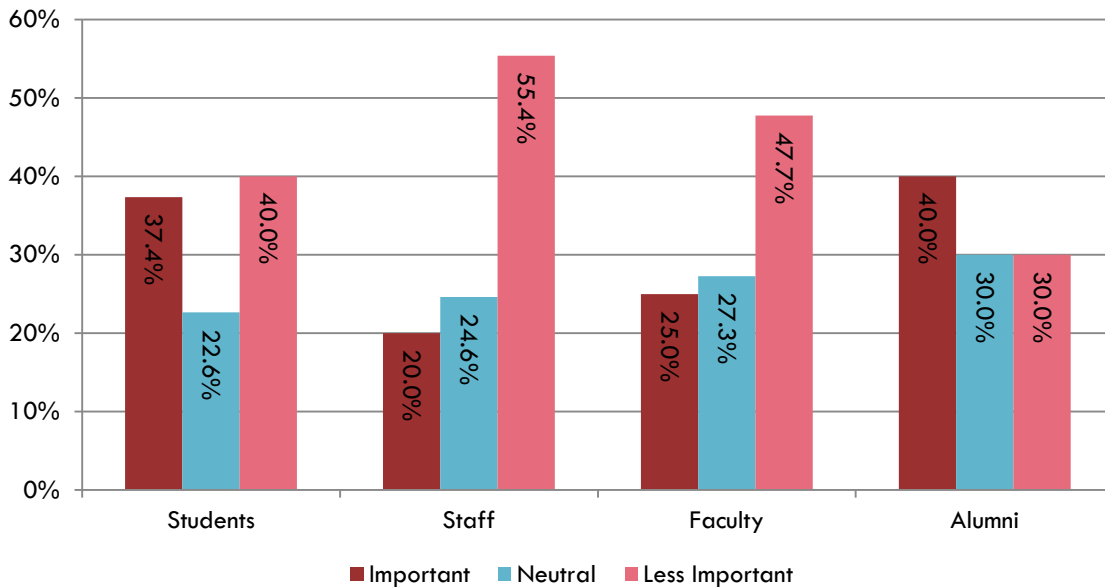
**Importance of Lower Level Children's Education Resources Suite**



**Possible Redundancies**

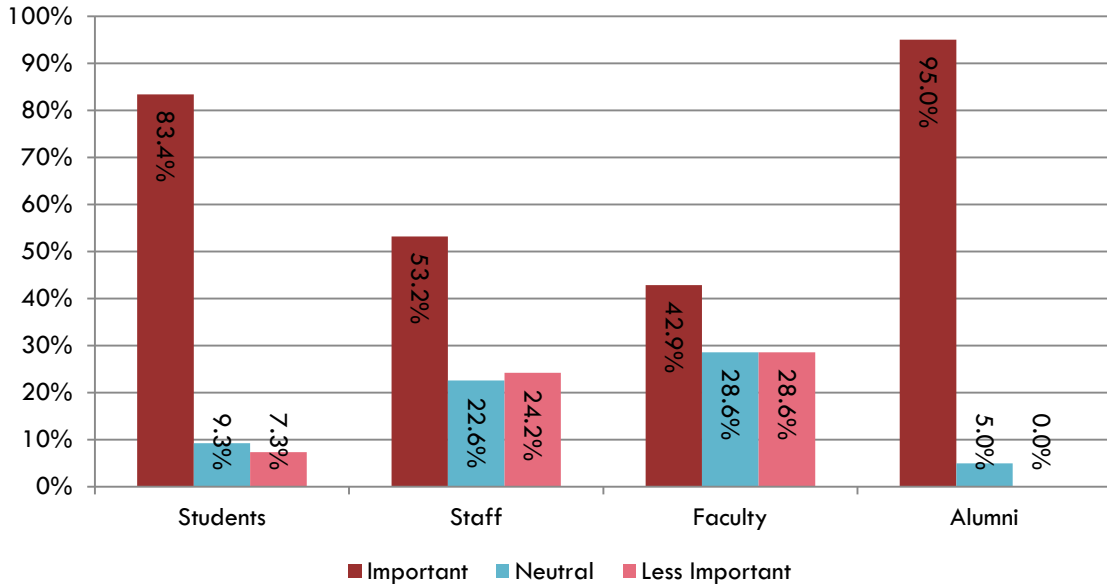
Responses to features that possibly duplicate functions of other buildings were more mixed. The student art gallery, computing services complex, and prayer room seemed to be questioned more than the auditorium, lyceum, and coffee shop.

**Importance of Student Art Gallery**



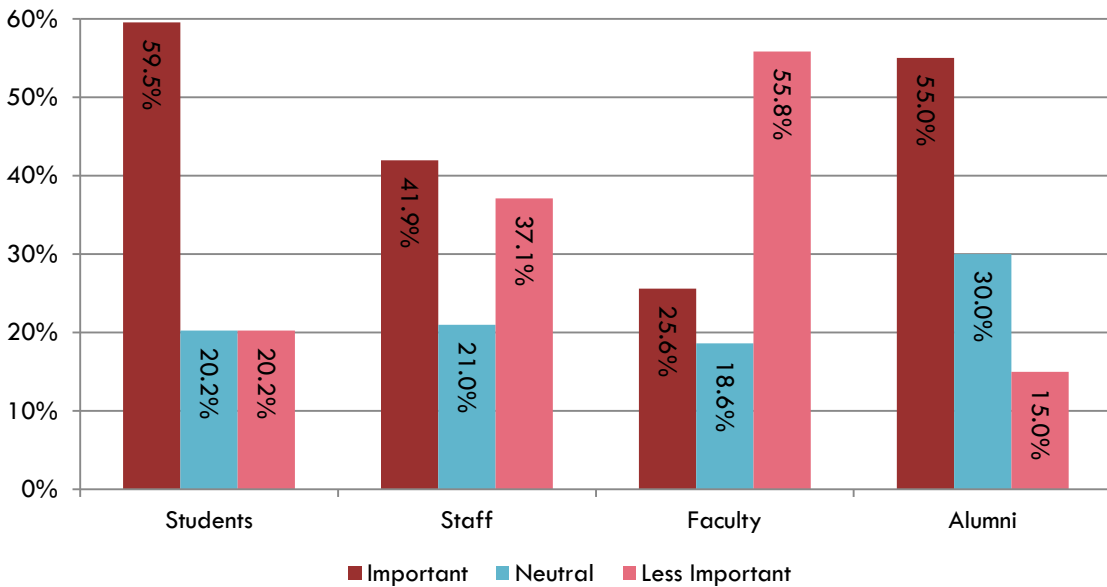
Comments here seem to note that the Visual Arts Center is a more appropriate place for a gallery or that student art could be incorporated into the learning commons without dedicating a specific gallery area.

### Importance of Computing Services Complex



One note about the importance of computing services should be made. Faculty and staff had the opportunity to listen to President Christy’s meeting about the learning commons plans, and they heard what cost savings would be generated by keeping computing services in Van Peurse Hall; students and alumni did not hear that same message. That could account for the large discrepancy in the results here. Regardless of where computing services main offices are located, it seems to be important to students that computer help be available at the learning commons.

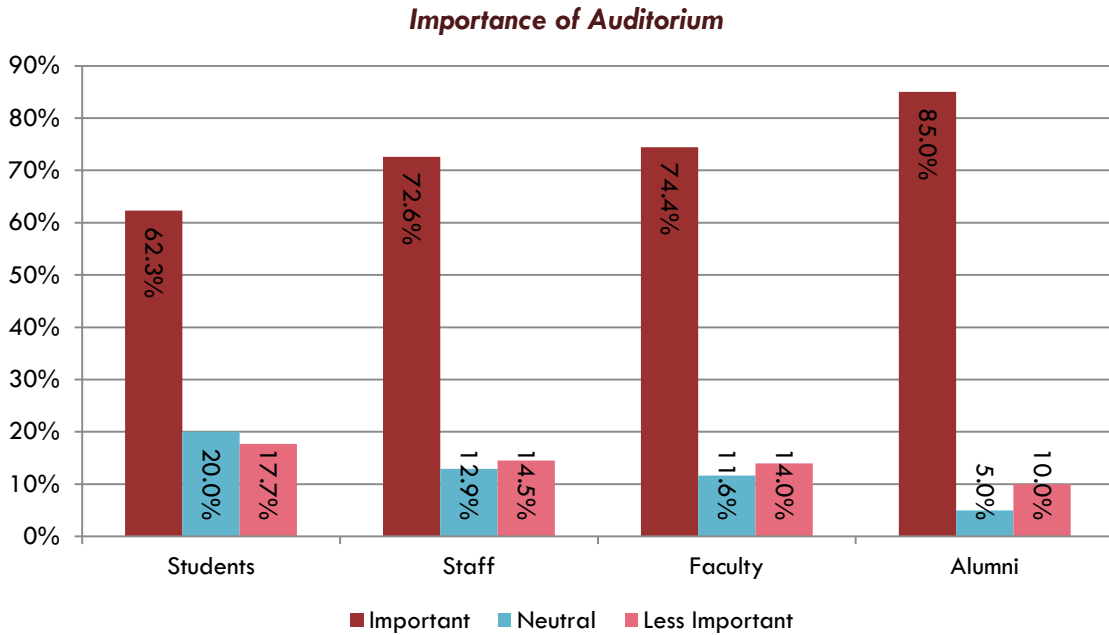
### Importance of Prayer Room



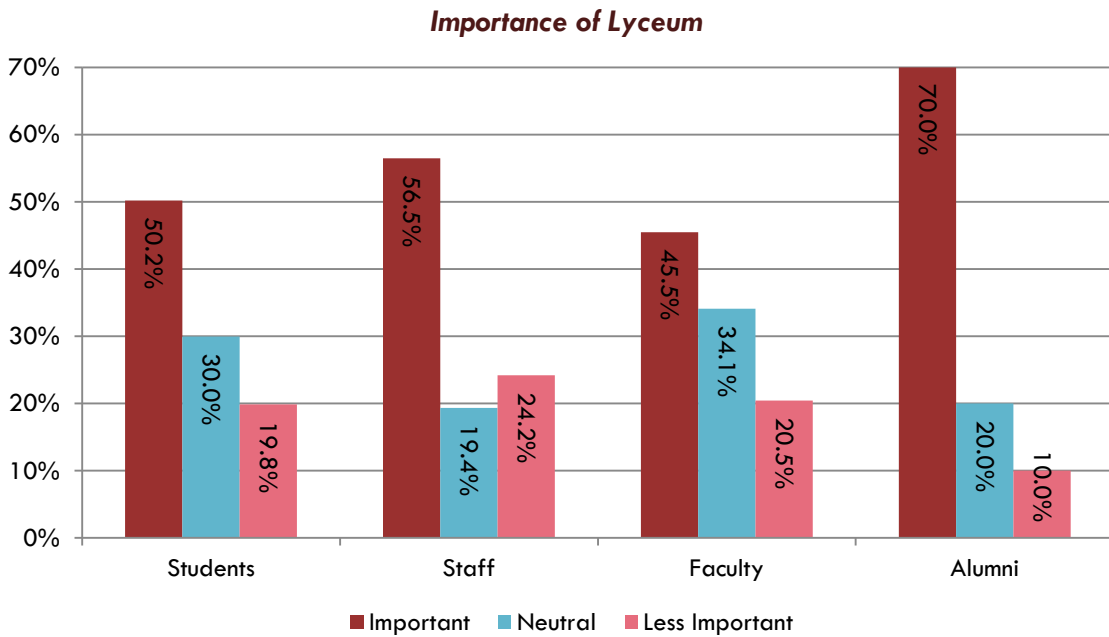
Comments about the prayer room reflected both sides. Some felt the prayer room was unnecessary because any place is appropriate for prayer and because the



chapel and Franken Center already supply this space. Others felt that the prayer room was an important space for integrating faith and learning.

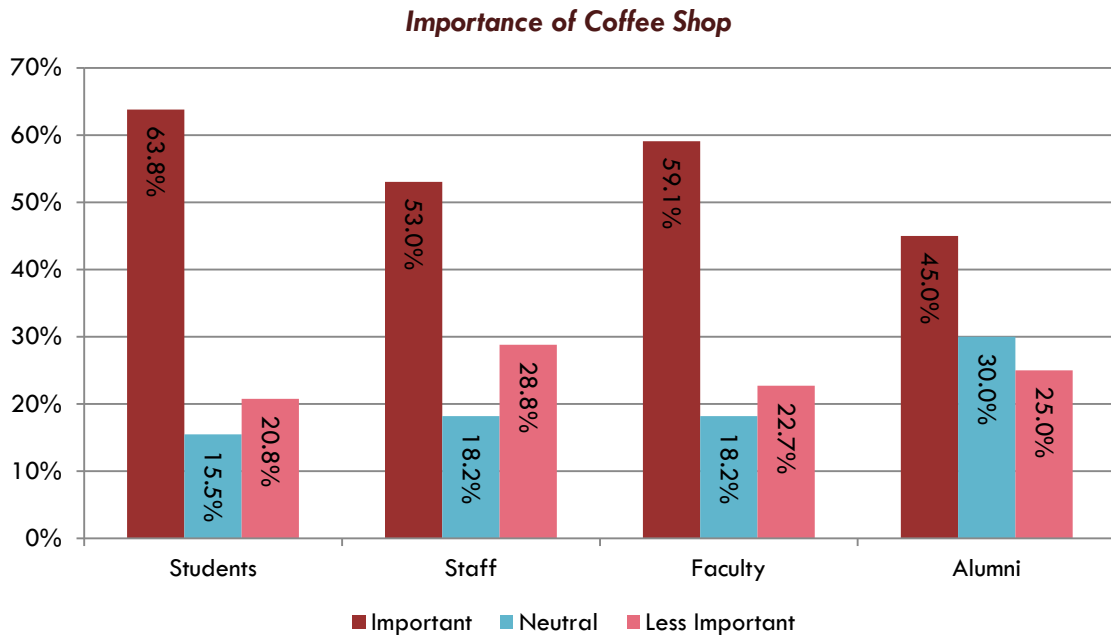


The auditorium seemed to be the exception to redundant spaces; it has widespread support from all constituencies. While some comments noted the existence of spaces in the theatre building and chapel, other comments recognized that the college does not have enough auditorium-style spaces.



The lyceum was not as well supported as the auditorium; responses of students, staff, and faculty all hover around the median; approximately half are supportive of the space while half are indifferent or unsupportive. Few comments were made

about the lyceum, yet those that did comment questioned whether the lyceum was located in the best space and if it would be better positioned near the auditorium.

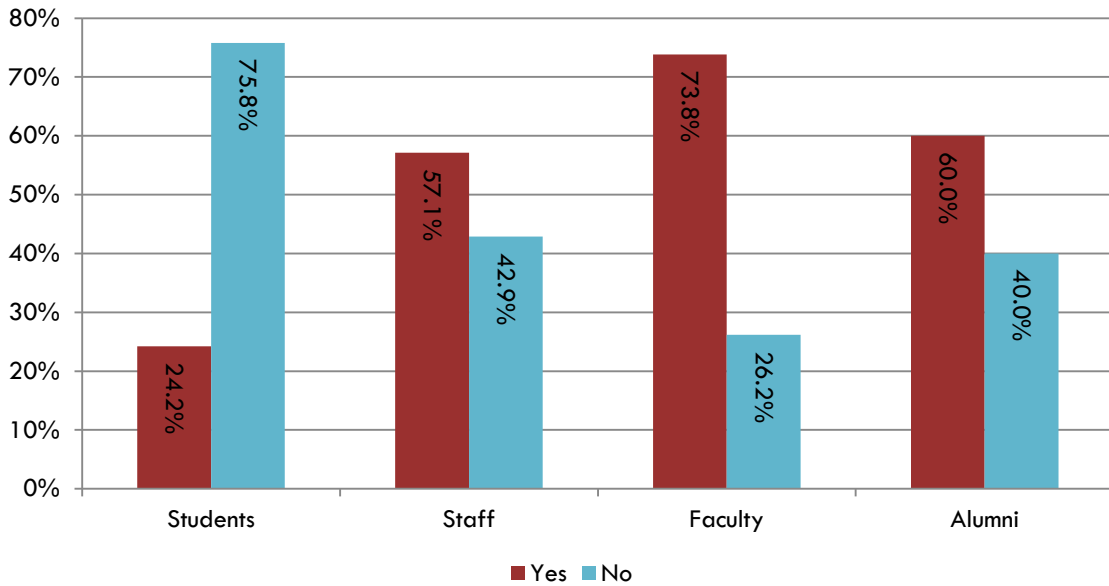


A number of comments indicated that the campus was already served by the Hub and that Orange City had other coffee shops as well. Even so, many respondents supported this feature. What’s more, as noted on pages 11 and 12, the coffee shop would be a draw for most constituencies.

### **Exterior**

Perhaps the greatest difference between students and other constituencies is noted by the reaction to the proposed exterior. Students, for the most part, thought the exterior was fine as is, while other respondent groups recommended revisiting those plans.

### Revisit Exterior?

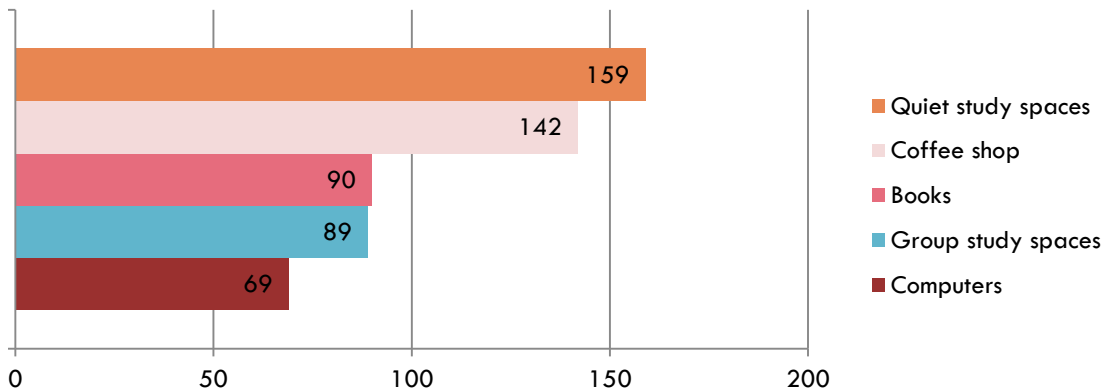


While no question in the survey specifically asked about the interior design of the learning commons, over 40 comments encouraged the planners to make the design warm, inviting, cozy, and not corporate. Over 20 also lobbied for an environmentally-friendly design.

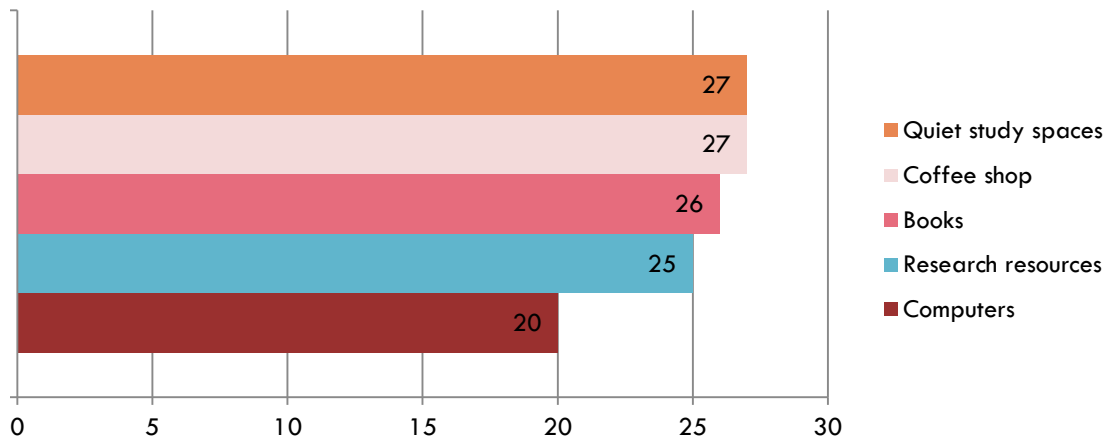
### Top Draws

The importance of the learning commons as a place for study and research is reflected by the responses here. Quiet study spaces topped 3 of the 4 lists, books was mentioned on all 4 lists, and group study spaces was included on 3 of the lists. The coffee shop also seemed to have large appeal for the campus community.

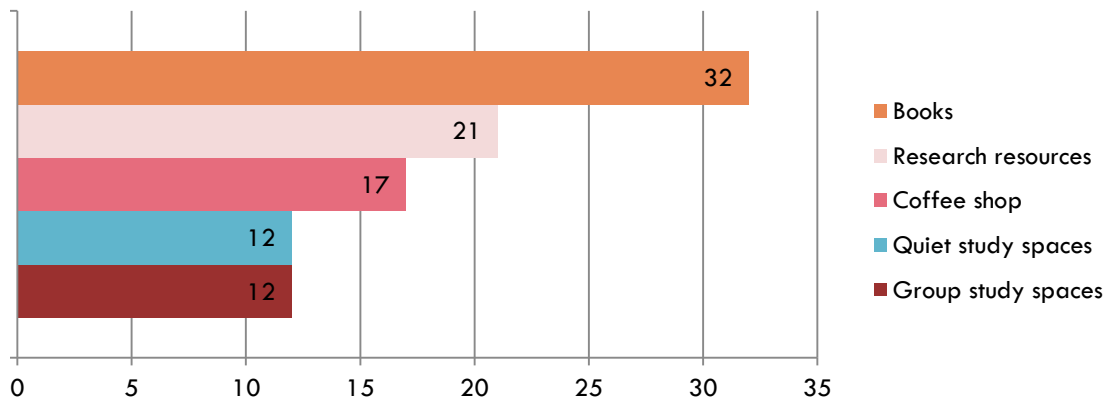
### Top 5 Draws for Students



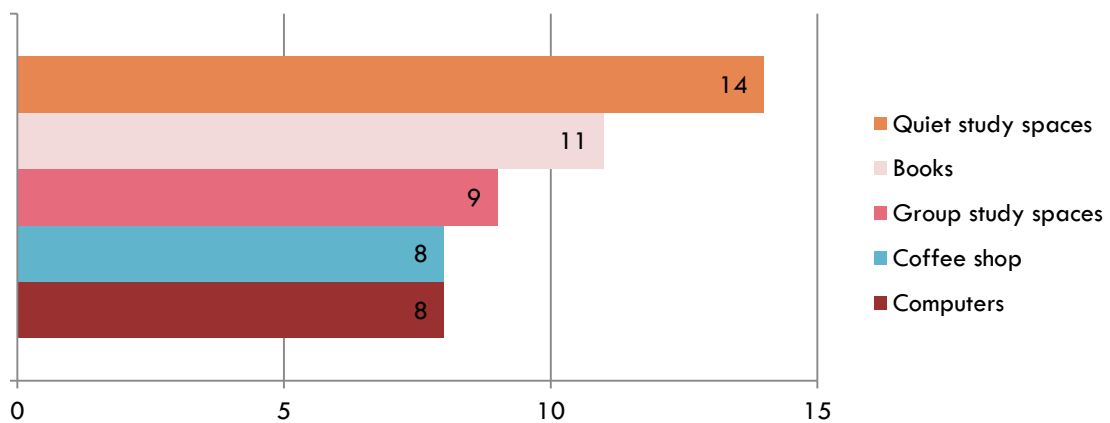
### Top 5 Draws for Staff



### Top 5 Draws for Faculty



### Top 5 Draws for Alumni



## **Conclusions**

Hopefully, the responses here will help the college better determine how to allocate its resources for the learning commons. While opinions obviously vary, the large number of people who took time to complete the survey, especially during the busiest time of the semester, indicates that this is a project for which the Northwestern community is undoubtedly passionate.