

SMC Campus Center: 10-Year Anniversary

Dec. 4, 2019
SMC Campus Center

Thank you, Kay. I'm so happy to join you for this celebration.

You know, this Campus Center wasn't my idea. And that's too bad, because I'd love to claim it. The center had just been built when I returned to UMB as president in 2010. So we have my predecessor, David Ramsay, to thank for this building. But we don't just have Dr. Ramsay to thank. We don't just have the advocates on his leadership team.

More than anyone else, we have the students of UMB to thank for this center. Because back then—just like now—they had the desire and the will to be connected with one another. When the Campus Center was started, no one actually thought it would be an overnight success. No one except students. The rest of us were poring over occupancy timelines and programming schedules—and forecasting when we'd get to capacity, when we'd see our efforts pay off.

But the students were already miles ahead of us. They almost always are. They embraced this building from the beginning. Because this center wasn't our vision. It was theirs.

Every student here today can tell you—probably down to the penny—what this center costs them in student fees. It's not insignificant. I know that. But it's a fee the students and the USGA support because it's THAT important to have a shared space where they can come together and learn with one another, have fun together, have big and difficult conversations together, and feel supported by each other—feel seen and heard.

And all of this has an accumulating effect. Because the conversations you all start here, they don't *end* here. They blossom into programs that explore our diversity, or lead us to interprofessional practice, or serve our neighbors, or hatch the next big idea.

This is where it all starts. Because we're better together. We're stronger together. We're Seven Schools | One University. And this Campus Center was the first manifestation of that that old tagline, that mandate that we get out of our schools and disciplines, that we mix our ideas, find out where they align and intersect, and go start something great together.

You know, there's research showing that the likelihood of organizations partnering with one another correlates to their proximity. The closer they are to each other, the more apt they are to connect.

And I think the same is true of people—it's why we're obsessed with technology that tries to shrink the space between us. That's what this center does. It shrinks the space between us.

And that's how I know it makes us better scholars, and better researchers, and better practitioners. I know it improves the care and counsel we provide. Because this isn't just where we come to support one another—it's where we test each other, test our knowledge, and opinions, and perspectives, and outlooks.

I've said many times that buildings don't make a University. And that's true. But I think the spirit of this building does make UMB what it is.

And, of course, there are big plans for the future. Dr. Alvarez will talk about those plans in a few minutes. That really is my greatest wish—that this building keeps growing and changing—just like the students who use it. But I hope it stays the same in one way: I hope it keeps sparking the connections that keep us close. Thank you.