

# Memorandum

**To:** Cynthia Holm, Director of Facilities; Deb KerKaert, Vice President for Finance

**From:** Olivia Garrett

**Date:** 12/7/2014

**Re:** Beautifying the Courtyard

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My name is Olivia Garrett, and I am a student at Southwest Minnesota State University. I am now a junior living off campus, but for my first two years at SMSU I lived on campus. Because of this, I have become familiar with the layout of campus, the courtyard in particular.

What is known as the courtyard by many is the open, grassy field outside of the old dorms like Shenandoah, Homestead and Armstrong that runs along Birch Street. Those who live in the old dorms or the Foundation Residence Apartments, as I did, have windows that look out onto the courtyard. Every day students see the same view of this empty grass field.

The courtyard should be transformed into an area with paths, benches, trees, flowers and plants to become a visually appealing and popular destination for those on campus. Paved pathways would allow for ease of access through and around the courtyard year round. Benches would provide seating for studying, socializing, and/or relaxing. Trees, flowers and plants would make the courtyard appealing to the eye as well as create a peaceful atmosphere.

Transforming the courtyard would first benefit those living or working on campus including students, employees, and faculty. This transformation would give these groups a new and appealing location to study, meet, and/or relax outside. Other areas on campus currently provide this type of space. The Garden courtyard and Central courtyard are two examples, but this part of campus by the dorms is lacking such a space. Although students living on campus would be the obvious group to utilize this area, it is not limited to just students. The courtyard is open to faculty, employees and community members to enjoy as well.

Secondly, this project would benefit the university as a whole by improving the overall visual appeal of campus. The way a campus looks and feels can be an important factor for students. For example, prospective students who take a tour will remember the area and may even picture themselves utilizing the courtyard when they attend our university. Constructing, updating and revitalizing areas on campus is a project the university constantly undertakes. Beautifying the courtyard is a prime example of the kind of project that would add value to our university.

Lastly, beautifying the courtyard would create a valuable use of what is currently just wasted space. As stated previously, the courtyard is now an open, grassy field with no specific purpose. Students currently use the area for an occasional game of Frisbee or playing catch when the weather is suitable. The proposed transformation would make the space usable year round, especially the sidewalks during the winter, for any individual or group on campus.

*December 7, 2014*

What makes this project unique is the simplicity of the idea and the location. The idea behind the project is not complicated and could be accomplished in a matter of weeks. Another reason this idea is unique is because there is already a predetermined area to work with. The area is like a blank canvas with no deconstruction necessary. Also, the physical location on campus is ideal. The dorm complexes, Foundation Residence Apartments and Birch Street provide consistent foot traffic through that area of campus, which would allow the courtyard to flourish.

In terms of finances, the total estimate cost to pave cement pathways, plant trees and flowers, and purchase benches would be \$20,000. To understand what the \$20,000 would be going towards, an estimate cost for each portion of the project is worth noting. An estimated \$10,000 will be needed to pave cement paths that will run through the courtyard. \$1,500 to \$2,500 will be required to purchase and plant 15 to 20 trees of varying types. \$500 to \$1,000 will be needed to purchase and plant numerous kinds of flowers and shrubbery throughout the courtyard. Finally, \$3,000 to \$4,000 will be required to purchase 10 to 15 benches.

Although that may seem high, the benefits of transforming the courtyard are equally high. The courtyard would be useful for multiple groups. It would also improve the overall visual appeal of the university and be a utilization of valuable space. Plus, once the area is transformed it will continue to grow and flourish for years to come. Once the initial cost of construction is covered, little maintenance will be required for upkeep besides watering and mowing.

Southwest Minnesota State University is a vital part of the Marshall community. Throughout the town are numerous beautiful parks that residents of Marshall enjoy. Why not give the university a place just as beautiful to call their own?