

Brian J. Moffitt, Ed.D.



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Entry details

Entry Name: Milo's DEN: Bringing the Heart of the City to Campus

Institution Name: University of Colorado Denver

Entry Completed By (*name and position*): Brian J. Moffitt, Ed.D., Executive Director

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Introduction:

Planning Milo's Den was a robust strategic process that included thoughtful consideration of the student space, menu, kitchen needs, and staff training. Our leadership team incorporated feedback from students, drew inspiration from the surrounding city, and worked collaboratively both internally with our local and regional chefs and externally with an architect and professional designers at XC Studios.

As a result of carefully planning at each step of the process, Milo's Den opened seamlessly, on-time and within budget, with back of house working smoothly and the space, and food, immediately resonating with students.

Essay:

We started the planning process by surveying students, faculty, and dining staff, identifying what would serve the campus best.

Next, our leadership team toured food halls around Denver. As an urban campus located in the heart of downtown, students have access to hundreds of dining options. We wanted to bring the energy and diversity of Denver's food scene directly to campus. We analyzed what resonated most with students, transforming insights into tangible design. We built distinct sections into the physical space so students could choose the best environment for their current needs, whether that was a space to study, dine with friends, or meet new people. These spaces were

inspired by city-spots like the Denver Milk Market. The Junction in Milo's Den was designed after the urban train system.

We planned out the menu to balance comfort and novelty. This included high-value staples, like wings, customizable options, like made-to-order burgers, and culinary experiences from around the world that rotate weekly to keep things fresh.

Finally, staffing levels were carefully planned and adjusted based on menu requirements, anticipated traffic, and operational needs.

Assessment at every stage of the process ensured Milo's Den's success before it even opened.

Introduction:

We deployed a multi-channel strategy in marketing Milo's Den, including social media, email blasts, print signage, university website updates, and word-of-mouth.

Beyond traditional marketing, we also understood students would be more engaged and excited if they felt ownership over the final outcome. To this end, we prioritized keeping the campus community informed every step of the way so they saw themselves as a driving force in the renovation. Thanks to this approach, Milo's Den Grand Opening was a massive success with over 200 attendees coming to celebrate the creativity of the entire campus community.

Essay:

We kept the campus community engaged throughout the entire process with social media updates, sharing behind-the-scenes photos and progress highlights. These posts showed students how their voices were helping shape the space.

As the renovation came to a close, we built anticipation with eye-catching print signage around campus, email blasts to students and faculty, and announcements on the university website.

Prior to officially opening, we invited Resident Assistants to a special lunch. This sneak peak helped generate buzz through word-of-mouth and served as an opportunity for our kitchen staff to hone their skills before launch.

Our Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting ceremony included an open house featuring Milo the mascot, menu samples, and keynote speeches from team members. Students were thrilled to try out the new flavors and come explore the space they helped co-create. The event gained traction and became a massive celebration of both the renovation and student body as a whole. It was the perfect way to christen a new community hub on campus.

Thanks to our persistent marketing efforts, Milo's Den was cemented as the new place-to-be on campus and we've seen a consistent upswing in both traffic and meal plan participants.

Introduction:

This renovation was successful because we created it with the help of everyone in the CU Denver community, from students to administration, to food vendors.

Feedback gathered from the broader campus served as the guiding framework for the overall vision and priorities, helping shape the venue's style and concept.

Collaboration with key university stakeholders, including Facilities Management, Design and Construction, Space Management, and Campus Planning, ensured that Milo's Den not only reflected the needs and preferences of the campus community but also aligned with institutional goals, operational requirements, and long-term campus planning strategies.

Essay:

The vision for Milo's Den came from many stakeholders throughout CU Denver.

We surveyed students, staff, and faculty to identify what was lacking and what had been successful in the previous dining space, determining where meaningful improvements could be made. Students expressed their desire for culinary diversity, with an emphasis on freshly prepared, made-to-order offerings. We took this feedback and collaborated with our chefs to curate a dynamic and relevant mix of cuisines.

A successful project didn't just need to meet student expectations, it had to be completed on-time, within the allotted budget, and contribute to the overall goals of university leadership.

To that end, we worked with multiple departments within the University of Colorado Leadership to ensure a well-coordinated project.

Lastly, we pulled in partners from the wider Denver community. We used the expertise of professional designers at XC Studios. Local eatery Little Man Ice Cream came on as a regular vendor, bringing an iconic Denver taste onto campus.

By listening and collaborating with the entire CU Denver community, we were able to make Milo's Den a success that will stand strong for years to come, even as the rest of campus updates and evolves.

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