

CAMPUS LIFE

Why university students need A FUNCTIONAL CAMPUS

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The sense of community to be found during our university years is meant to be unlike any other. Having a campus is an integral part of the university experience, and a well-functioning campus provides much needed relief from the academic and personal adversities that come with being a student.

As a student of BRAC University (BRACU), a university that is yet to move to a permanent campus, the importance of having a campus became clearer to me through the sheer irony of writing this article. At the end, university to me simply seems like a means to get a degree, and I cannot identify with the place as much as I probably should.

Sameen Yasar, a student of Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP), says, "A campus is the face of the university, in the sense that it attributes a physical quality to an otherwise abstract entity. Simply put, if there's no campus, the mental image of the university will be a bunch of random desks, white boards, and a certificate. You can't attribute personality to a faceless man, nor to a campus-less university."

When it comes to building a "face," universities need to look beyond textbooks and lecture rooms. A good campus should provide the kind of atmosphere that allows students to take a breather from the classrooms and academic work. Recreational facilities and canteens make the campus more vibrant and congenial for both students and faculties, and the university experience more memorable.

Ryan Ahmed, a recent graduate from the University of Toronto, says, "Even though I graduated from university over a year and a half ago, I still have vivid memories of being on campus and in university. From eating from nearby food trucks with my friends after exams and talking about how terribly we did, going to paint nights as a way to de-stress during particularly stressful times during the year, playing foosball in our Student Centre, to doing a part-time job on campus in my second and third



ILLUSTRATION: FATIMA JAHAN ENA

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year at the Athletic Centre, all of these places helped me meet people, stay sane, and develop bonds with people that otherwise wouldn't have been possible if the only place I went to was class."

Merely having a campus is not enough, as maintenance is just as important. Some university campuses mismanage the resources provided for students, which results in things like low-quality food in

cafeterias, congestion due to lack of space, lack of proper ventilation, and other detrimental issues. Nadia, a student from North South University, shares, "The canteen food from Kashundi has been a consistent problem where they serve days-old food that often has an unpleasant smell. My negative experiences with Kashundi are not unique, it's a sentiment shared by many on campus."

Crowding is another major issue which is faced in a lot of universities both with and without campuses. "I think my current campus is extremely crowded and in dire need of better maintenance. I do not particularly enjoy being there. The only solace is a few small animals that we allow to roam within the grounds," said Khalil Ahmed*, a student from Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB). "The exterior and interior design could use some improvement; a well-designed place can have significant impact on its occupants. I wish they would also be more conscious of the students they are letting in. The high density of students has caused the overall quality to deteriorate apart from the lack of space."

Ahmad Shakib, a fellow BRACU student, resonated with this sentiment, saying, "A university should be a place for free thinking, cooperative discussions, a place for cheerful minds having the time of their lives. But

instead we have to waste 15 minutes for getting from one building to another to catch a class due to the lack of actual infrastructure or campus. The unhealthy amount of student intakes without having a proper campus for accommodation makes it clear that we need a campus of our own."

A good campus goes in tandem with the quality of the education and is essential for any university looking to be taken seriously. In addition to providing the standard campus experience that people usually expect, universities should also think about what they can do to separate themselves from each other and create a campus which facilitates social interaction, good research and work opportunities, and a life outside the classroom. A campus should help ease the stress of students with a refreshing atmosphere and convenient location and facilities. However, having a campus without proper maintenance is just as bad as the absence of a campus altogether, as both serve to make university life harder than it should be.

*Names changed upon request to maintain privacy.

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