

DePaul Central: Not Just a Place...A Promise

DePaul Central opened on the Lincoln Park Campus in June 2006, providing a one-stop location for integrated student services in three key service areas: Financial Aid, Student Accounts and Student Records and Registration.

DePaul Central is intended to reduce the time, effort and occasional difficulties students face in the regular transactions required as they register for courses and make their financial arrangements for enrolling at DePaul. It also serves as a single point of referral for students needing assistance in resolving other concerns.

In addition, in the process of solving individual students' problems, DePaul Central staff continues to learn and develop systemic solutions to improve overall processes in order to make all students' enrollment experiences at DePaul as smooth and seamless as possible.

Development of DePaul Central

Locating in close proximity and integrating the most common student services surfaced as the best solution to avoid students from being "bounced" from one office to another as they addressed various linked transactions. After developing plans for technology interfaces and the physical office space on the Lincoln Park Campus, an ambitious project plan was completed in a matter of months: demolition and renovation of offices and staff cross-training began in May 2006; soft opening of the new office space in June 2006; and grand opening of the new service for students in September 2006. This accomplishment was the result of a collaboration of six administrative divisions: Enrollment Management and Marketing, Financial Affairs, Student Affairs, Facilities Operations, Information Services and Academic Affairs.

With successful implementation on the Lincoln Park Campus, plans were made to meet the growing demands of the rising student population at the Loop Campus with a physical Loop DePaul Central location; demolition and renovation of the 9th floor of the DePaul Center began in February 2008 and the new office opened in May 2008. In 2010, only two years after opening, the Loop location saw slightly more (51.6 percent) visitors than the Lincoln Park location.

In 2011, the final step in the original implementation of service integration was completed after four years of research and development. Centered on the Loop Campus in an ergonomically designed quiet area, cross-trained contact center agents, who are well versed in the "two-tiered" service model that the DePaul Central front desk staff are trained in, provide students a one-stop contact point through a single phone number for questions and issues regarding Student Records, Student Accounts and Financial Aid matters. Using Call Copy, a call recording application, call content is analyzed to better predict and report on how integrating all incoming calls improves service.

In addition to institutional success, there is evidence that DePaul Central has positioned DePaul as a leader in integrated student services. In April 2009, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers featured DePaul Central in an all-day, pre-conference workshop titled "Integrating Student Services to Improve Student Success: DePaul Central Proves a Cooperative Model." Student service professionals from around the globe participated in the workshop, which included tours of both DePaul Central offices, meetings with DePaul Central staff and a workbook with "how-to" implementation plans.

DePaul Central Operations

The DePaul Central locations on both campuses house employees from Student Records, Financial Aid and Student Accounts who all have access to systems allowing them to provide necessary resolutions to student needs, questions and concerns. Staff members are cross-trained in order to work the intake desk to resolve 80 percent or more of inquires at the first point of contact, and professional counselors are available for walk-in or scheduled appointments at all times.

The Division of Enrollment Management and Marketing, through Student Records, provides overall management of DePaul Central. Ongoing input and involvement of the university community ensures that DePaul Central is responding to the needs of students. A DePaul Central Advisory Board, with staff representatives from across the university, meets quarterly to coordinate efforts to improve operations. In addition, data about DePaul Central's services are collected and tracked in a number of ways to inform decision-making for new and enhanced services, staffing and future technology solutions.