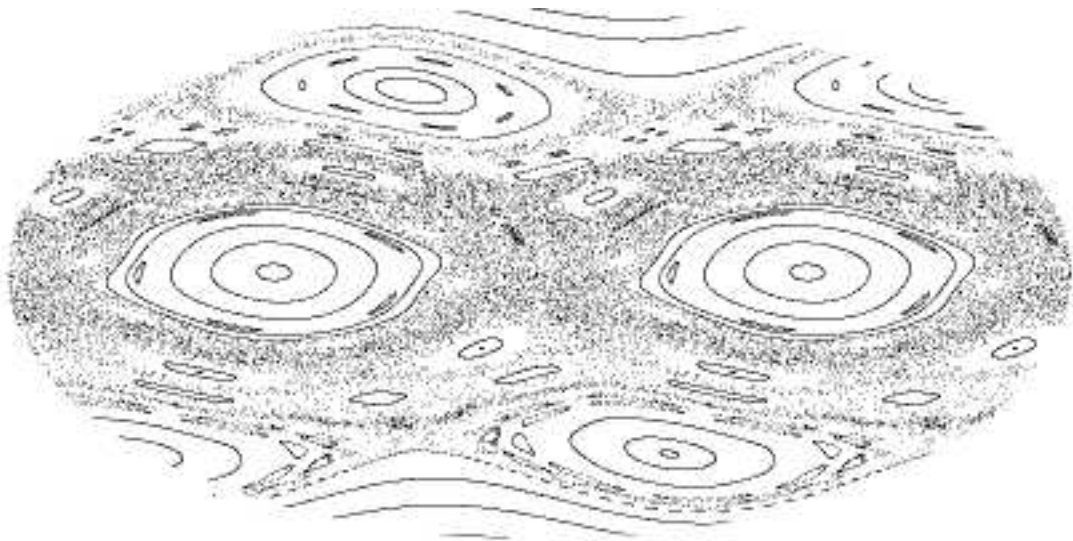


# Proposal for the Learning Center

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August 6, 2003



## An Alternative Community and Personal Improvement Center

### **Abstract**

There are too few centers for the improvement of whole individuals in social contexts, an area where widely influencing experiments can be explored. This proposal outlines a 3 year plan for the development of a not-for-profit, membership-based, community-centered improvement center, combining an ever-changing calendar of talks, workshops, and seminars with facilities for personal development, craft work, and holistic health. There is also a strong humanist undercurrent with social and societal goals. This document describes the founding principles, constitutional structure, a schedule of goals, and financial projections. This is a frank, internal document, and not meant for general distribution.

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# 1 Introduction and Overview

## 1.1 General Overview

Our world today breeds fractured, fearful, stagnant, convergent, and prejudiced individuals. Perhaps these tendencies are not as prevalent as in earlier times, but they exist in all of us at ultimately destructive levels (note the recent war on Iraq, 2003). The dearth of contexts available for fostering wellness is largely to blame. This proposal describes a new attempt to develop a community for the improvement of whole individuals, called the Learning Center.

The Learning Center is to be a not-for-profit combination of an educational institution, health club, wellness resort, community center, not-for-profit collective, residential community, and grassroots movement. The Center features an ever-changing, eclectic assortment of seminars, workshops, and study groups; resources for skill development and hobby craft work; and a workout room, exercise equipment, and group activity areas. Individuals may join as members to take unlimited advantage of the Center's activities and become part of the democratic government that runs the organization. These members would form the core of a non-exclusionary community which emphasizes continuing individualized development and the appreciation of the diversity of individuals. The Center will also offer short-term lodging for visitors, as well as long-term lodging for members who want to be part of an intentional co-housing-like community built around these features. All of these aspects naturally complement each other, forming an organization capable of truly changing lives, both broad enough to resonate with all aspects of society and specific and distinct enough to appeal on practical as well as ideological grounds.

The following subsections describe in more depth each of the key faces of the Learning Center.

## 1.2 The Improvement Center

The Center will have an endless calendar of lectures, workshops, and discussion groups, as well as resources for intellectual and physical improvement, and personal and vocational

growth. The Learning Center is not an adult learning center, in the normal sense: it is not just for adults, although everyone will be treated as a mature human being; it is not just for intellectual improvement, but improvement of the whole person; it is based on a “membership” financial model, rather than on a per-class basis; and it is not geared toward “remedial” classes, but classes for interest.

The Improvement center is based on principles of Wellness, which are typically put in terms of health of the mind, body, and spirit. However, rather than emphasizing the whole “health” of the individual, the Learning Center is interested in the value of these three areas of internal real estate, which can always be improved. Also, the Center is not a religious institution, and supports spiritual wellness through a context which advocates inspiration and a sense of community, as well as supporting the “vibrant spirituality in each individual” [12].

The Experimental Study Group at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology is my model in this, and presents a time-tested environment that practices many of these principles, though in a limited context. Although ESG is technically an “alternative freshman program” at MIT, geared toward offering first year students another option for their core classes, it includes a much larger social community of learning and goals. ESG prides itself in offering many ways to learn, giving students control over their educations, and constantly experimenting to develop new ideas for learning, where many of these experiments are developed by upperclassmen who teach in ESG.

### **1.3 The Inn and Resort**

The Center will have a number of rooms (probably 8 - 12) available for daily rent for vacationers who want to visit the area around the Center as well as take advantage of the activities and features of the Center.

By its “Inn and Resort” characteristics, I do not simply mean the Center’s potential for enhancing vacationers’ visits to an area. The structural and systemic aspects which are found in Bed and Breakfast Inns, in particular, happen to coincide perfectly with those which best form a residential branch of the Learning Center.

The Learning Center would combine something the luxury expected of a Bed and Breakfast with an exciting and goal-oriented resort-like atmosphere. In this way, the Learning Center follows the Peace Abbey in Sherborn, MA, which offers comfortable lodging for the purpose of mediating on peace.

## **1.4 The Co-Housing Collective**

One hope is that for some people, the Learning Center will become a residence and a way of life. The Learning Center has the structure of a commune, for those who choose to take part in it, working together to live well, improve themselves, and further the goals of the institution. The rooms available for overnight visitors may also be rented on a longer-term basis like a apartment, where the community aspects of living take place in the various common areas.

However, just as the community aspects are of great value, so is personal space and independence, making the Learning Center similar to a co-housing community, where each unit shares in the community while maintaining its own internal structure.

## **1.5 The Community Center**

The Center would be a gathering place for a great diversity of people interested in improving themselves. To facilitate this, there will be comfortable places to lounge around and commune, either after finishing work for the day, or during the day for those with work they can bring to the Center. As a community center, the Center would draw people together, offer conference space for open activities, and offer inspiring foci for gathering. It would offer this hospitality as it could to locals and foreigners alike.

This kind of community center is similar to that of a Palestinian Matafa, or meeting house. The Lucy Parsons Center is also a model in purposed community centers.

## **1.6 The Movement towards Utopian Goals**

The Learning Center has an ulterior motive of wide-spread social change, and will act both as a example for future communities and a source of ideas and methodologies which apply to life in general. These goals address how people respond to differences and the goals and self-directiveness of individuals in a changing society. It is also to address how people should work together in society. The Center must itself be a model of the way this future society should be, as well as organize people for social change by recognizing these characteristics.

These individual, communal, and societal goals are the true purpose of the Learning Center.

## 1.7 Situational Expectations

To give an idea for to what sort of context the following proposal applies, below is a description of a hoped-for physical space for the Center. Also included are floorplans for a hypothetical and a plausible building and use of spaces.

The space should be able to be divided into general areas:

- **Guest Rooms/Personal Spaces**

Personal spaces are furnished rooms with individual bathrooms. There should be between 6 and 20 rooms, and ideally 20% of the rooms will be hostel style, 30% will have 2 single beds, and 50% will have 1 double bed. These would be used for both short and long-term lodging.

- **Commons Area**

The common area is the bulk of the improvement center area. The common area will be split into three main sections, each of which has approximately a third of the space allocated to it. Each draws on a different function of wellness. For more information, see *THE THREE PILLARS OF THE LEARNING CENTER*.

Spirit Function: These are community spaces, with open areas for interreaction and fluid usage, and kitchen for community use.

Understanding Function: These are intellectual spaces, with information resources, classrooms, discussion areas, and “exhibits” for exploration.

Skill Function: These are the spaces for “physical” pursuits, including athletics, sports, as well as arts, and crafts.

- **Members’ Area**

This is a space set aside specifically for members and their guests. This may include a kitchen, and a smaller common space including a smaller lounge.

The Members’ area also includes resource rooms, like the Laundry Room, storage, mail, and publications.

- **Administrative Area**

Administrative areas will be places to store and work on records for internal functioning, and for providing information for communication with the outside world. This may also include a “front desk”, to welcome visitors to the Center. When the front desk is not staffed, the front door would be locked.

Some sections of the area will sparkle with luxury, others with usefulness, but each will be a reflection of the whole Center, in all its complexity.

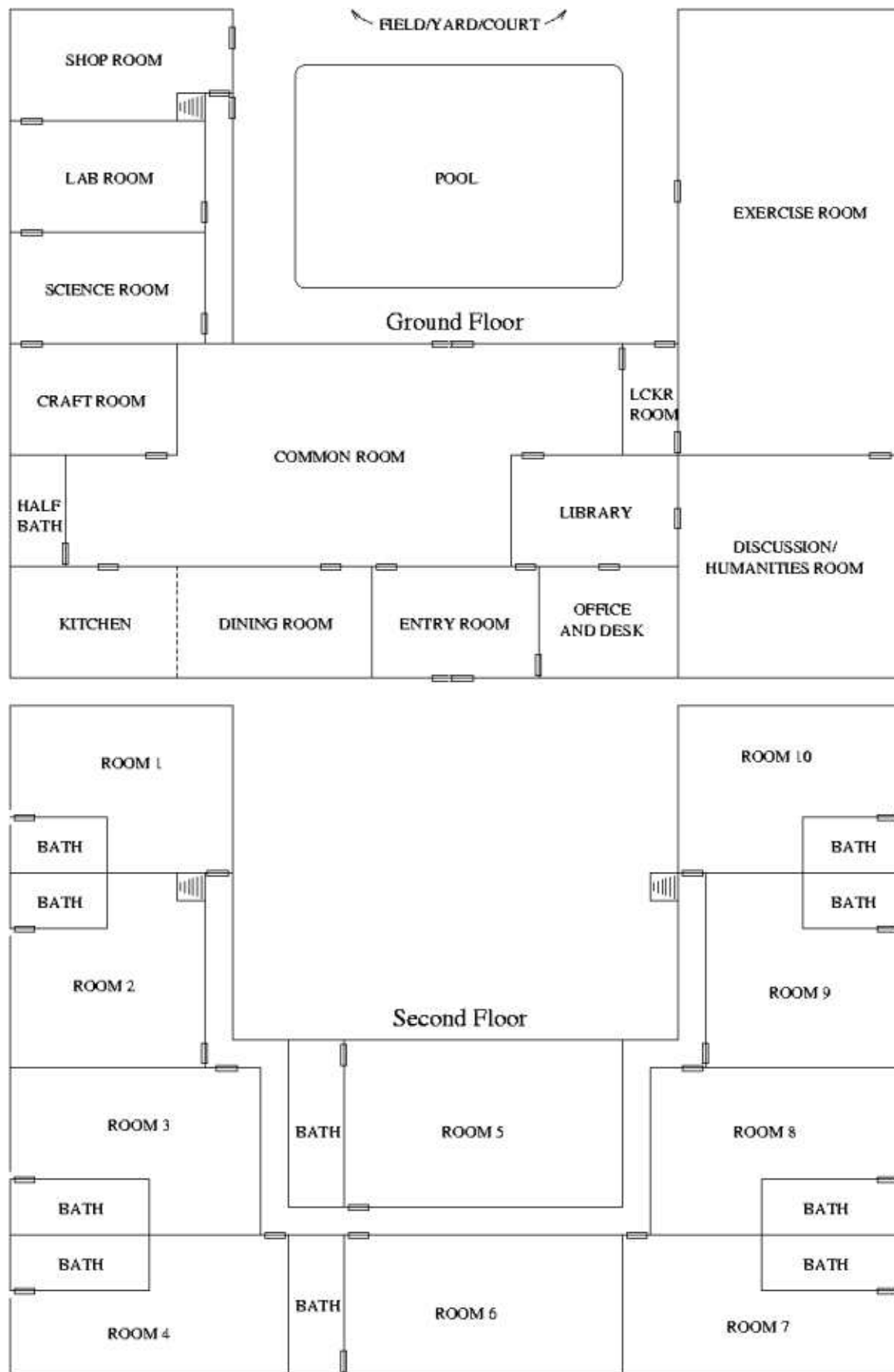


Figure 1: Theoretical Floorplan





## 2 Basic Structures

### 2.1 Individual Classifications

The following “types” of people (which form overlapping classifications) will be discussed:

- **Non-Residential Visitors**

People who are there for the day or for a particular activity. Almost all participants in the Center will start as visitors, paying for the activities they participate in, like an adult learning center.

- **Residential Visitors**

Residential visitors are people who are vacationing in the area of the Center and want to use the Center as a kind of vacation-enhancing Bed and Breakfast. They will naturally spend much of their time away from the Center, but part of the attraction for lodging there will be that activities that run during their time.

- **Guests of Members**

Guests are considered prospective members. They accompany a member and come at his or her recommendation. They have many of the rights of members, for the limited time that they are at the Center, but do not have the responsibilities and the corresponding rights of authority.

- **Members**

Members are people will full rights and responsibilities. They pay a monthly price for using the Center space as often as they like and participating in any activities (although there may be additional costs relating to activity materials). They also have equal power in the governance of the Center, deciding where money should be spent and what activities should happen.

- **Officers**

Officers have responsibilities over arenas of the organization, and make sure that things that need to get done are done to make the Center work effectively. Officers are always members, and have special roles in the governing of the organization.

- **Volunteers, Paid and Unpaid**

Volunteers are absolutely necessary to the smooth functioning of the organization. They are officially solicited perform needed tasks. Volunteer labor need not be unpaid, but it must be motivated by of individuals’ desire to help the community. Often, though, pay for a service task will take the form of decreased membership dues.

- **Paid Helpers**

Helpers are hired help taken from outside the community. While helpers are probably necessary to start, they create a disjunction between the operation of the organization and the goals that the organization is trying to promote, and as a result are undesirable.

## 2.2 Officers

The constitution structure necessarily must be modified to fit the people whom it concerns, to fit the roles they are fit to fill. On the other hand, there are rules that make the structure so things which need doing are done, and that change to fit the people is possible.

There will be four administrative officers, all of which must be members of the Center. Officers are in charge of various arenas in the Center. They have budgets to facilitate their responsibilities. These budgets are discussed and decided by the entire community.

Officers may have others work under them, and are encouraged to do so, particularly deputies learning large parts of the officers' jobs. If any such position is to be long-standing, the individual must be a member. It is the officer's prerogative to let another have any task. However, the officer must be capable and willing to take any task which is not being done by another within his arena.

- **Housekeeper**

The "Keeper of Stuff", in charge of cleaning, maintenance, and tracking of all rooms and equipment. *A Jungian Sensor.*

The Housekeeper deals with all of the physical details of the Learning Center. This includes the organization of the spaces, the craft and shop equipment and equipment for physical improvement, and a storage.

This also includes maintaining the cleanliness of the spaces, for which the housekeeper may choose to hire paid helpers (cleaners).

- **Provost**

The educational coordinator, organizer of activity leaders and the calendar of events. *A Jungian Intuitive.*

The Provost is primarily interested in possibilities and the activities of the asylum involved in helping individuals pursue their own potentials. The Provost is also concerned with quality control and maintaining contacts and "open doors" for future activities.

- **Innkeeper**

The equivalent of a hostess or bar tender, concerned with living and social matters of satisfaction and communication. *A Jungian Feeler.*

The Innkeeper is a combination of a host/hostess, bar tender, guidance councillor, and gossip. The Innkeeper is the heart of the Center. It is he or she who will welcome new visitors, be involved in attracting visitors, and be there for general helpfulness and information flow.

- **President**

The president is responsible for finances, protocols, legal matters, and other administrative issues. *A Jungian Thinker.*

The President is the red-tape of the Center. However, the president's job extends far beyond paper work, and includes the smooth running of the organization as a whole, with its internal bureaucracy, and the interaction between it and the rest of the world. This includes ritual facilitation, information tracking, and legal and financial matters.

The terms of office for all of the administrative officers can be quite long.

Officers should work together on advertising materials, including the webpage, with the design decisions ultimately the responsibility of the innkeeper, and much of the content the responsibility of the president and provost.

## **2.3 Membership**

Unlike Adult Learning Centers, the Learning Center does not address costs on a per-project basis. Rather, it is designed more like a health center, or a cooperative.

Membership entails owning a part of the institution, including paying for its maintenance and having a say in how the institution runs. All members have some say in where their money goes— what times of the day and week they want to support activities, what areas they are particularly interested in helping to maintain and improve. Members would have unlimited use of the areas and full voting rights, with their say on issues being as much as any other member's say, including the officers.

Members may choose to pay for long-term residence, but this does not confer any special status on a member. Residence is a thoroughly distinct option.

## **2.4 Decision-Making and Governance**

All decision effecting the entire community are made by the entire community. However, the process by which this is done is by delegating responsibility to another group which then

may make decisions dictatorially, only to be vetoed by a majority of the group. The entire group is responsible for reviewing and approving the decisions of others, not making the decisions collectively.

The most important principle of governance in the Learning Center is the ability for individuals and committees to get authority over those things they are organizing. The included figure show how power is decisions are made in the Center.

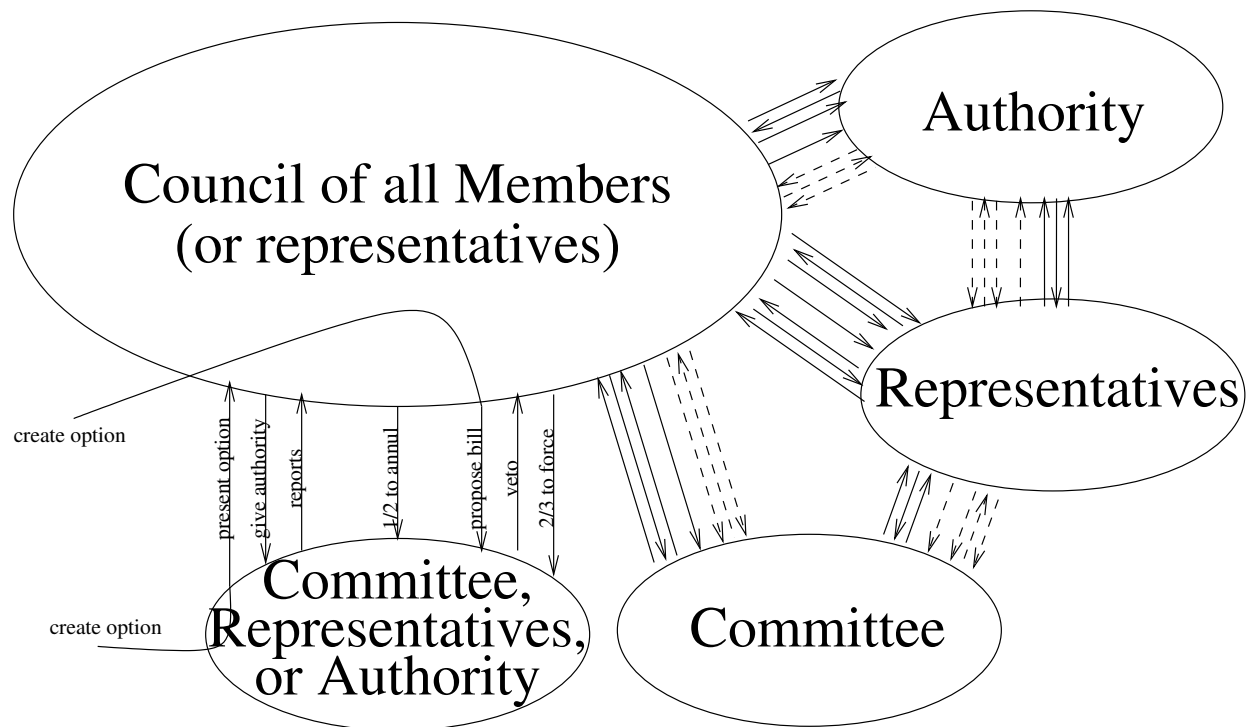


Figure 3: Authority Sturcture of the Center

An “option”: a suggestion for policy or action, is created by an individual or a group, and this group presents itself, along with its option to the Council of Members (A). Depending on what kind of option the group proposes, it might be called a committee (if it exists to carry out a task), an authority (if it holds power over an arena), or a representative (if it can act in the name of the Council). Representatives groups may do the actions of the Council in the description here, if they are within its realm of representation. The Council approves of the option by unanimously giving the group the authority to carry out the option it presented (B). The Council may not place restrictions on the group, but it may withhold approval until certain restrictions are agreed to. After this point, the group is responsible for reporting to the Council on its work, progress, success, and difficulties (C). If the Council decides at some point that its wishes are not being accurately carried out, it may choose to annul the authority of the group, withdrawing its authority from the actions of the group, by a 1/2 vote (D). It may propose that the group adopts a policy or takes an action. The group may refuse, by the veto of any of its members (E), in which case, the Council may force the adoption or action by a 2/3 vote (F).

Ways the diagram works:

- **The Initial Authorities**

The president, over legal and budgetary matters.

The provost, over improvement center matters.

The innkeeper, over community matters.

The housekeeper, over equipment and material matters.

- **The SCA Autocrat**

If someone is running an event, they come up with the idea, are given authority in the form of money and support, and report back. Considerable unhappiness (1/2 vote) is needed to disband them.

- **Porto Alegre Budget**

All members create group of representatives (one authority) who then create a proposal. There exists a budgetary officer, the president, (another authority). If the budget officer veto the proposed budget, the representatives need a 2/3 vote to over-rule.

- **Congress-Style Bill**

Someone proposes that "We [as a group] follow this rule under these circumstances." In one case, everyone agrees with the suggestion to an extent that all will follow it, in which case, no decision need being made. Otherwise, this can be done either of two ways:

A) As a vetoed proposal to a committee of all, which must be over-ruled by a 2/3 vote.

B) A rule that needs an enforcement device— in which case, the enforcement authority must be created through unanimous choice.

- **Inter-group decisions**

Many difficulties arise at larger levels than a single group. Assume that there are many groups. How does this work for making larger decisions?

Individual groups empower representatives who join inter-group discussions. These discussions result in "options" (just like any authority, committee, or group of representatives might). Then each group can choose to join the option (like a large-group budget) or not.

Concerns:

- **Decisions still need to be made, even if consensus is not possible**

True, but not necessarily \*new\* things. Expected necessities are already built into appropriate authorities.

- **Will there be terms of office**

Most “giving of authority” will come with limits of various sorts.

- **A 2/3 vote is necessary to override an authorities decision, but only 1/2 vote is necessary to remove all power from it. Is not the latter more likely?**

Perhaps. However, if people have so little confidence in the \*general\* competence of the authority that they want to destroy it, then it should go away. More likely, a particular aspect of the authority will be seen as incongruous with the will of the community and will be overridden.

In addition, the 1/2 to stop power is for stopping an authority from actively exercising its power, while the 2/3 to force is to make the authority take an action that it does not wish to.

- **Are there adequate checks and balances?**

The members as a whole have enough direct power that a complete system of checks and balances is not necessary. However, power is spread out so that no one person or group will have all of it.

Conflict resolution is another important aspect of governance. Conflict are inevitable, and may take the form of harassment and discrimination, as well other infringements of others rights. If a conflict occurs between members and visitors, it should be resolved under the jurisdiction of the President, as the person most interested in facts and policy. However, if the conflict occurs between members, a group consisting of the inflicted, the inflictor, and mediators is formed. This group must come to a consensus decision on the course of action taken and punishment incurred.

## 2.5 Rituals

Rituals are simply the periodic get-togethers which help keep the community together by developing symbols of importance to it.

- **Daily Ritual: Breakfast**

Drawing on the principles of a Bed and Breakfast, the Center will have a daily get together around breakfast. This is a time to talk about the events of the day, as a fresh start, when the participants are still newly awoken.

- **Weekly Ritual: Weekend Lunch**

The weekly ritual will also center around food, but with more emphasis on the vibrant energy of the community. The Weekend Lunch will be a time for much of the community to get together and share news. There would be a time for announcements, and short matters of business (group decision-making).

- **Biseasonly Ritual: Center Events**

Center Events would happen about once every 6 weeks, or twice a season with the events near the equinoxes and solstices being the greater of the two. These would combine a variety of attractive activities, and would be open to the public as a demonstration of the Center as a whole.

These would be a time to show off the work that the Center and individuals therein have been developing, making the event itself part of the goal that is necessary to make the process possible and encourage people to spend their energy.

- **Yearly Ritual: Center Anniversaries**

Every year, there will be a large event, drawing together people many associated with the Center and groups like it. If the efforts to spawn a larger movement succeed, this will be a get together of people from all parts of the movement everywhere.

## 2.6 Communication

There are a number of important roles for communication in the Gumption Center and the importance of communication impells a corresponding variety of means of communication.

- **Posted Communication**

Information, including on the government, will be clearly posted and kept up to date, as is the habit of a well-run dormitory. Ever Green College, an innovative liberal arts college, has “bulletin boards throughout the College where curricular ideas are constantly submitted for public view” [20, Ever Green]. This is similar to the ESG system of posting ideas for study groups and seminars, and their sign-up sheets [16, 36].

- **Newsletter**

The Center needs to have a newsletter to go out to all of its members. The newsletter would include information about upcoming activities, recent and future decisions, and articles which might be of interest to members of the Center (such as the work of one of its members). The newsletter would also include a way to get feedback from members about activity interest and for governance decision-making.

- **The World Wide Web**

The Internet is a place for information about the Center and information of the Center. It has at least two distinct uses and audiences. The front-most is to visitors, who want to know about the Center: activities that are open to the public, spaces available for visitor lodging, and information “about” the Center. However, the webpage is also a place to make available information for current participants of the Center. Such



# Gumption Retreat Response Card

PLEASE REPLY BY MAY 15

<i>Activity Name and Time</i>	<i>Interest</i>	<i>Reserve</i>	<i>Conflict</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Governance Decisions</i>	<i>Approve</i>	<i>Reject</i>	<i>Abstain</i>	<i>Comment</i>
<b>Topic Presentation</b>					<b>Smoking in the Courtyard</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Robert Pirsig-- "East Meets West"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	22% of members smoke. Complaint: rules cause exclusion from group; smoke outdoors will not cause discomfort.				
Adam Smith-- "History of the Clay Tile"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Should smoking be allowed in the courtyard?				
Issac Asimov-- "How to Write Sci-Fi"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Funds for New Books</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Colloquium on the Effects of the Internet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Request of \$200 for 10 new science books, various subjects. Last purchase 4 months ago; science book requests high.				
<b>Academic Classes</b>					<b>Spring Picnic and Show</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Beginning Number Theory	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	RSVPs needed for May 29 picnic event. Lunch & Desert: \$6				
Alternative Sources of Energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Show at 3:00, \$2 additional (covers costumes).				
Science, Mathematics, and Music	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	RSVP: Picnic Rsv's: _____ Show Rsv's: _____				
<b>Discussion Groups</b>					<b>Comments</b>				
Plato's Republic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____				
Current Candidates for Mayor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____				
Ethical Issues in Science	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____				
<b>Workshops</b>					_____				
Andean Weaving: The Backstrap Loom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____				
Uses of the Operational-Amplifier	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____				
Soap-Making	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____				
<b>Athletic Activities</b>					_____				
Yoga	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____				
Fencing Practice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____				
Softball (w/ local competitions)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____				
<b>Other</b>					_____				
"Pippin" Theater Production (pls. comment)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____				
Candle Party	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____				

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

## Gumption Retreat

### 3141 East West Street

### Anyhow Town, XX 99999

NO POSTAGE  
NECESSARY  
IF MAILED  
IN THE  
UNITED STATES

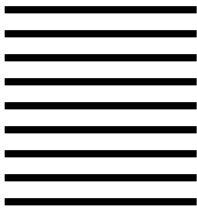


Figure 4: Example Response Card for Newsletter

resources would include past activity handouts, upcoming event planning, and contact information for people with authority over different activities.

- **Email Lists**

Email lists are an important way to advertise activities, share interests, and discuss import issues. The most important structural aspect for taking advantage of this medium is a mechanism for creating arbitrary numbers of lists for many different purposes, whose subscribers can be derived from other lists.

- **Mass Media Information**

The Center can easily be misunderstood by the local media, which has a great influence over the opinions and potential participation of local individuals. By developing a relationship with local newspapers and other media, the Center can make the power of mass media work to its advantage, with information about Center activities, informative press releases, and invitations to events.

- **People as a Communication Medium**

The most important method of communication is through people, inside and outside the Center. One of the roles of the Innkeeper is to make sure that people talk to each other under many circumstances, and to collect rumors which suggest ways the Center is being misunderstood, misused, or misdirected. In this way, the Innkeeper acts as a Connector, in the sense described by Malcolm Gladwell [21].

- **Center Phone Book**

To facilitate communication between members, most of whose time will be spend at their homes or jobs, the Center will publish a regularly updated phone book with the contact information of all members.

## 2.7 Growth and Movement

The Learning Center will multiply by dividing. Every time it reaches approximately 150 members, it is time for the organization to split and spawn another location, based on the same principles but with necessarily unique particulars. This is based on the considerable evidence for the upper limit on the size of a community [21].

An important mechanism for growth is an enduring endowment. The following flow chart shows how extra money (non-membership dues or residence fees) is distributed and used.

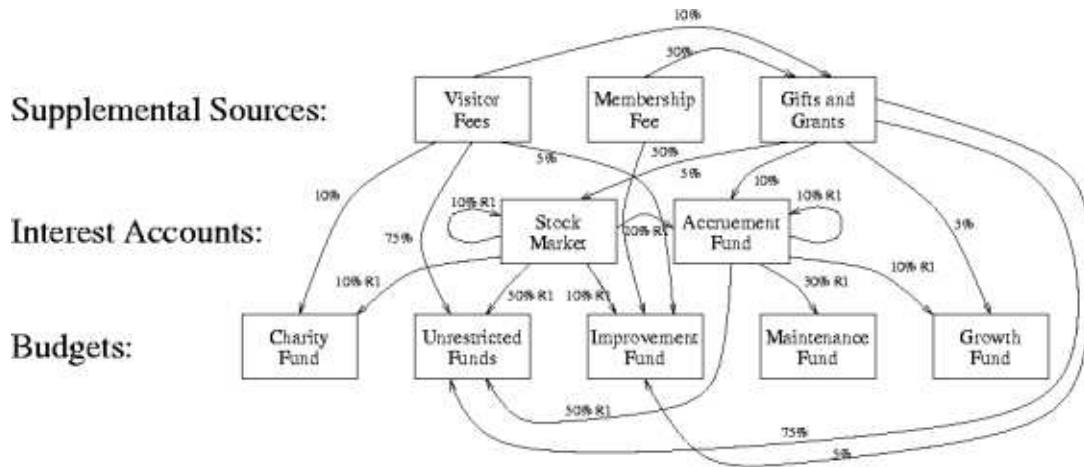


Figure 5: Flowchart for the Center Endowment

## 2.8 Potential Community Areas

Community spaces are designed for comfort and interaction; anyone can use the space and hang out. Potential rooms and spaces include a lounge, dining room, communal kitchen, games room, a stage, a bar or cafe, and a store. The resources to be found in the community areas may include member mailboxes, tables, couches, and storage for entertainment, cleaning, and working (office) supplies.

Proposed division of space:

- **Common Lounge:** 1/2  
With sofas, tables, and chairs, and some sort of wild life (fish, plants, or iguanas). Possibly a hammock.
- **Dining Room:** 1/6
- **Community Kitchen:** 1/6  
The kitchen should have spaces for public and private food storage.
- **Storage:** 1/12
- **Bathroom:** 1/12

## 2.9 Potential Understanding Areas

The Understanding areas might include a lecture hall, or smaller relative thereof, library, computer room, lab room, study areas, and a variety of rooms with tables, chairs, and

resources for particular academic pursuits, like mathematics, sciences, literature, and engineering.

The following refers to spaces as “optimized” for various uses. That is, these spaces would have appropriate resources and a setup that is refined and improved from using the space for the sorts of activities. Proposed division of Space:

- **Optimized for Humanities:** 1/4

A center-facing room, with many books.

- **Optimized for Science/Math:** 1/4

An individual-centered, or possibly front-centered room, again with books.

- **Optimized for Information Resources:** 1/4

A kind of miniature library or museum would be ideal, with a variety of books and computers.

- **Optimized for Labs/Workshops:** 1/4

With a large table, equipment, materials, and a water supply.

## 2.10 Potential Skill Areas

Skill areas might include a shower room, a pool, a room with a wood floor, a room with a padded floor, a metal shop room and a wood working room, a sound-isolated room for music, and a comfortable room that can be easily cleaned for crafts.

Proposed division of Space:

- **Hard Exercise:** 1/3

With Exercise Equipment, hard wooden floor, and one wall covered in mirrors. Used for dance, theater, and gymnastics.

- **Soft Exercise:** 1/3

Large, with a padded floor and minimal gymnastic equipment. Again, one wall should be covered in mirrors. This room could be used for martial arts and aerobics.

- **Machine Shop:** 1/6

The machine shop would include power tools for working both wood and metal.

- **Art/Music Room: 1/6**

The art room would include many art supplies. If there are more than one room, then each room would have supplies appropriate to a type of art.

So much of the space is used for “exercise” just because that needs more room for moving around. The rooms for hard and soft exercise can be combined, with a roll-out pad.

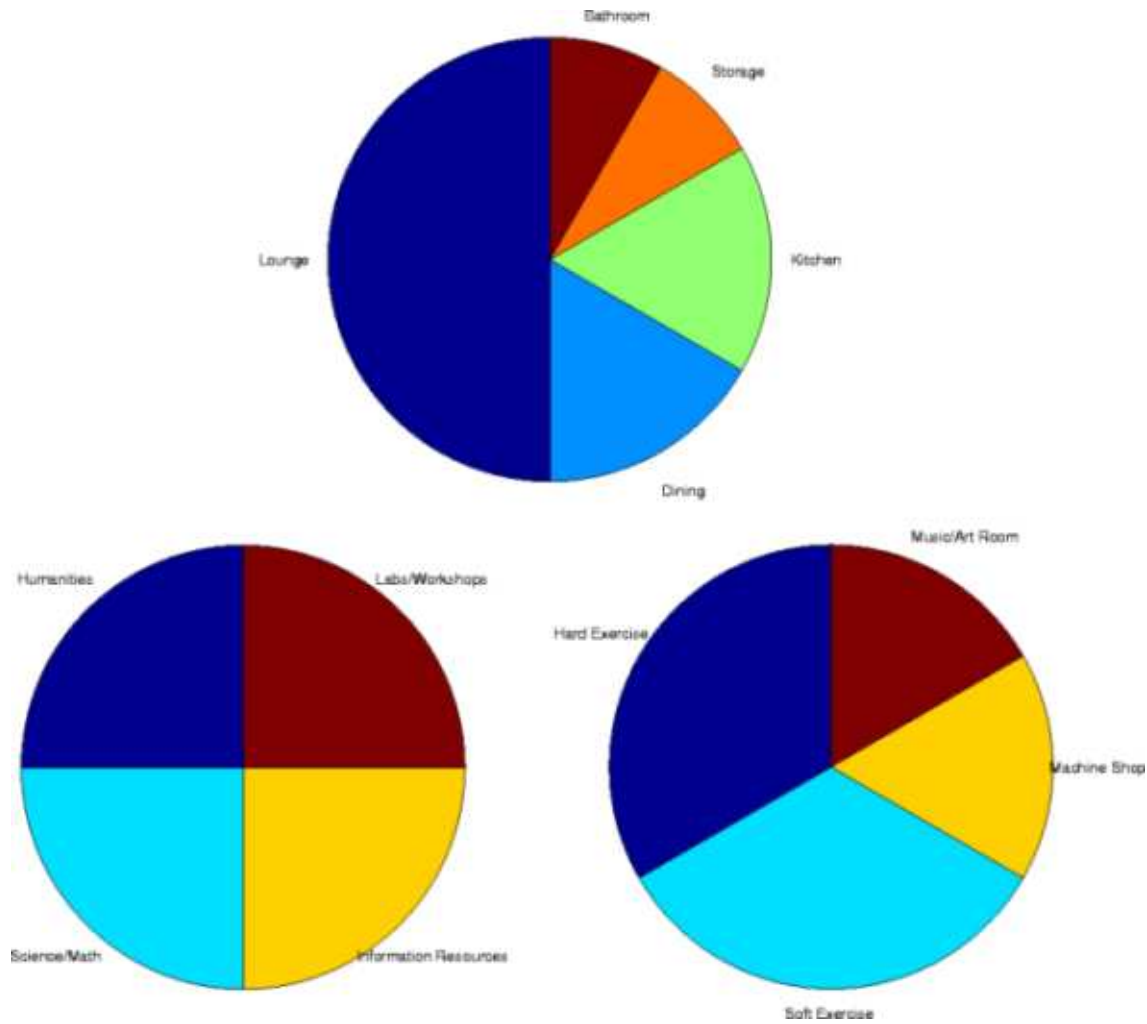


Figure 6: Proposed Division of Space

## 3 Motivations and Inspirations

### 3.1 Educational Motivation

For the past century, there has been an ongoing crisis in education worldwide. Students are being frightened away from intellectual pursuits and get warped conceptions of proper health and fitness; they are forced to be docile and uncreative; and naturally become unmotivated and juvenile by their lack of responsibility and healthy learning environments.

Long has it been said that to change the world into a better place and change the way people think, the changes must start young. High schools complain that by the time they get children, their time previous has been essentially wasted. Graduate schools complain that they are forced to teach graduate students basic material that they should have learned long ago.

I wish to propose another option than blaming children or placing the responsibility of change on them. For things to change, change must start with the groups in which people self-associate.

The following are the goals I see as central to the Improvement Center of the Learning Center:

- **Better Learning**

Learning in schools is warped by many other concerns, on the part of the teachers, students, and administration. Teachers are forced to busy themselves with discipline, grades, and unhappy parents. Students, in general, do not want to be in school and are uninterested in the subject material they are forced to digest. Administrators, under budgetary, community, and accreditation pressures, are primarily interested in putting a good “face” on the students and their activities, irrespective of the long-term effects of that conformity.

The Learning Center, in contrast, is entirely voluntary and self-initiated. It is this resonance of goals which will inspire students to Deep Learning.

- **Community of Learning**

Learning is not simply the result of an individual effort.

- **The Liberal Education**

St. John’s College, a liberal arts college, holds that the purpose of the liberal education is to give the “useful” arts of living a basis in the “liberal arts: the arts of apprehending, understanding, and knowing... the intellectual virtues” [18, 7]. Education is about virtue.

- **Striving to Improve**
- **Acceptance of Divergent Learning**
- **Reason to Learn**
- **Self-Initiated Learning**
- **Balanced Pursuits**
- **Resonance between Pursuits**

When one explores any area of human pursuit, it helps one in all of the others. This is a natural synthesis that exists in endless combinations of enterprises.

Every area of human pursuit is characterized by a distinct “way of thinking,” and each way of thinking is limited and the perspective it can take on the nature of things.

- **Unending Learning**

St. John’s College calls its members of the faculty “tutors” “to signify that it is not their chief role to profess or lecture in their field of expertise but to guide the students through the program of study” [18, 4]. E.S.G. called its instructors “elder learners”

### **3.2 Inclusion of Exercise and Craft Areas**

We do not want to put an emphasis on appearance, but exercise areas have other benefits, which will be outlined here.

### **3.3 Context for Other Activities**

This can be a place for home schoolers to get together.

This space, with its programs already running, will be used for a summer camp for children.

### **3.4 Inclusion of a Bed and Breakfast**

The Bed and Breakfast idea complements the other aspects of the Gumption Center in many ways.

- **Startup Mechanism**

The scope of the Center's activities and goals are so vast that they need to start somewhere. The Bed and Breakfast will offer a foothold for further expansion.

- **Reason for Space**

This is the most directly practical reason. It will be difficult at first to find individuals who want to join an experimental intentional community.

- **Place for Utopia Building**

- **Attendance for Classes and Events**

Members will attend activities as the times and interest coincide with their own. However, a much higher percentage of Bed and Breakfast visitors may be expected to, since the activities during their stay will be one of the principle attractions and part of their visiting fee will go towards making these activities possible.

- **A Natural Fit for Modern Lives**

Many people today are extremely busy and feel they have no extra time and energy to spare on improving themselves. However, the vacation is a perfect time for these kinds of activities.

- **Income for Learning Center**

The B&B will act as a steady source of income to support other activities and lower the cost that members need to pay.

- **Large World Connection**

[communication, spreading ideals; natural place for the necessity of visitors]

- **Making Visitors Serious**

- **Coincidence of Structure**

The commune-like atmosphere with greater personal space and independence of bed and breakfasts, along with the ritual of daily breakfast, and the conveniences of cleaning and communal repairs, points to a distinct resonance between the Bed and Breakfast and the residential aspects of the Center.

Another convenient similarity is that those things that a B&B tries to do for its patrons – provide information and resources related to nearby attractions – are the same things the Learning Center will do for its members.

The following is a discussion of possible objections and ways of dealing with them.

- **Extra-Community Interference**



The Learning Center common area should be “owned” by its members. They should feel like it is their space, an extension of their homes. The introduction of strangers, additional stress, the need for hospitality, combined might drive members away.

These are true, but necessary, I claim, even without this additional structure. The solution is to have a “community lounge” only open to members and their personal guests.

- **Incompatibility of Ideas**

It might be said that a B&B main purpose is service to its patrons, while the Learning Center’s is service to oneself; or that B&B’s are concerned with comfort, luxury, and romance, and that these ideals detract from those of the Center.

- **Divisive Time and Resource Allocation**

Including a Bed and Breakfast requires more space, more time, a larger budget – in general, more considerations, when every additional consideration puts the Center at this stage on shaker ground.

## 4 Financial Projections

This financial calculations cannot be done as though the organization were in a steady state. Areas will constantly be improved and revalued. This is modeled using differential equations.

All equations will be in terms of a 1 month.

### 4.1 Finances Organization

It is not enough to design a model where revenue equals expenses. There are different areas of revenue, such as the benefits to members versus those to Bed and Breakfast patrons, which should as much as possible compensate within themselves. To make things more difficult, the proposal describes the creation of an institution, and its financial makeup is expected to change over that time, so that those changes need to be built in here. Initially, the Center will be predominantly a Bed and Breakfast, with very few members. That source of income should support its own displacement as a source of income for any purpose but itself.

Below are the different pieces of the organization for which interrelated financial projections will be developed.

- **Members**

- **Residence for Members**
- **Visitors of Residence**
- **Non-Residential Visitors**

## 4.2 Situational Factors

- **Personal Spaces**

$N$  personal spaces

- **Spaces**

$r_i$  is the size (ft<sup>2</sup>) of each personal space

$s_i$  is the common spaces ( $s_0$  is the lounge)

$t_i$  is the community (members) space ( $t_0$  is the lounge)

Mortgage, Heating, Lights, and Building Taxes are equally split among the different areas.

## 4.3 Members Projection

### Income: Membership Fees

Ideally, or eventually, membership fees will be done on a donations-only basis, with suggested donations. If a formal business plan is needed for loans, the following will be required.

- **Adult Memberships**

Adults are defined as 16 and up, or based on their financial independence.

$w_{adult}/\text{month}$

$m_{adult}$  members

- **Child Memberships**

Children are up to 10 years old.

$w_{child}/\text{month}$

$m_{child}$  members

- **Middle Memberships**

Adolescents are from 11 to 15.

$w_{middle}/\text{month}$

$m_{middle}$  members

- **Family Memberships**

There will not be separate family memberships.

- **Enrollment Fees**

Enrollment fees will be useful for the few things that are needed at enrollment: a new mailbox and membership card. This should also go toward building the next location, slowly building a down-payment.

## Expenses

- **Webpage Domain**

WebDomain  
3

## 4.4 Residence for Members Projection

There are  $N$  personal spaces total; at any time  $n$  are being used as residences.

### Income: Rental Costs

$u$ /month

$n$  residential members

## 4.5 Visitors Projection

### Income: Visit Costs

- **Full Use Visitors**

$x$ /day

$k$ /day expected daily use visitors

- **Specific Activity Visitors**

$y$ /day + an amount based on the activity for specific use

$l$ /day expected special activity visitors

## Expenses

- **Webpage Domain**

$$\frac{WebDomain}{3}$$

## 4.6 Residence for Visitors Projection

There are  $N$  personal spaces total; at any time,  $N - n$  are available for visitors.

### Income: Visit Costs

- **Daily Visitors**

$$\begin{aligned} & z_{daily}/\text{day} \\ & \alpha(N - n)/\text{day} \text{ expected residence rate} \end{aligned}$$

- **Weekly Visitors**

$$\begin{aligned} & z_{weekly}/\text{week} \\ & \beta(N - n)/\text{week} \text{ expected residence rate} \end{aligned}$$

## Expenses

- **Webpage Domain**

$$\frac{WebDomain}{3}$$

## 4.7 Activity Leaders

The following considerations can characterize an activity and effect how much should be paid to the activity leader for organizing and running the activity. If the leader is a member, the pay will be reflected in a lowering of the member's dues.

- **Leader Relation**

The leader may have no relation to the Learning Center (a "foreigner"), be associated by chance (a "local"), or associated by choice (a "member").

Leader Relation:	Foreigner	Local	Member
Coefficient:	1.5	1.3	1

- **Leader Knowledge**

The leader may need to have considerable expertise in the field (“expertise”), considerable past experience (“familiarity”), or may just need to have the energy to organize the activity (“ignorance”).

Leader Knowledge:	Expertise	Familiarity	Ignorance
Coefficient:	1.5	1	.5

- **Activity Duration**

The activity may continue for a period of time, like a season, (called “ongoing”), or for a set number of times (if it is run once, it is called “one-shot”).

Activity Duration:	One-Shot	Ongoing	$x$ times
Coefficient:	1.5	1	$1 + .5/x$

- **Activity Structure**

The activity may have a set plan for moving from one topic to another in a logical pattern (“structured”) or simple have a number of aspects which will be addressed from various directions (“essential”).

Activity Structure:	Structured	Essential	Session Preparation Time $x$ Calculation
Coefficient:	1.5	1	$1 + x/2$

- **Activity Uniqueness**

This may be the first time the activity is created and run (“created”), or it could use the materials and methods of an activity that has been run in the past (“re-run”).

Activity Uniqueness:	Created	Re-Run	Past Runs $x$
Coefficient:	1.5	1	$1.5(x + 1)2^{-x}$

- **Participants Role**

The participants may have no significant role in the preceding (as an “audience”), have a structured role (as “participants”), or be in charge of their own projects for the duration of the activity, like in a lab class (as “free-running”).

The coefficient for the number of participants depends on their roles and is wrapped up in this coefficient.  $x$  is the intended number of participants, or groups of participants.

Participants Role	Audience	Participants	Free-Runners
Coefficient:	$\log_2(x)/4$	$x^{1/2}/3$	1.5

- **Work Design**

The activity may have all of its work build into the casual participation of the activity (“atmospheric” work), or given in addition to the activity, like homework (“work-based”), or the work involved could be in the effecting of some considerable project (“project-based”).

Work Design	Atmospheric	Work-Based	Project-Based
Coefficient:	.8	1	1.3

- **Other Factors**

The following factors have been intentionally left out, as they do not reflect differences of ideological interest.

Frequency (common, uncommon, or rare), Popularity, Reservations requirements, the existence of a distinct coordinator who is not the activity leader, leader position (recitation instructor, subgroup leader, helper), the experience level of the participants, the amount of reseach involved, the willingness of the leader, and the wages for time spent after the activity is officially complete.

The product of all of these factors, times minimum wage, equals the hourly wage for an activity leader.

## 4.8 Mortgage and Loans

The largest cost will probably be the mortgage and loan payments. These take two forms.

The equation for the fixed monthly payments on a loan is given by:

$$M = Pi/(12(1 - (1 + (i/12))^{-12n}))$$

where  $M$  is the monthly payment,  $P$  is the loan amount,  $i$  is the interest rate per year, and  $n$  is the number of years.

### Startup Loan

The Startup Loan will be between \$10,000 and \$200,000, depending on how much work needs to be done on the location and how much of the down-payment will need to be paid for by the loan.

For example, a \$100,000 startup loan, repaid over 3 years, at 5% interest would result in a monthly payment of \$2997.09.

### Mortgage Loan

The Mortgage loan will be a standard 30 year loan for between \$300,000 and \$2,000,000.

For example, a \$900,000 mortgage loan, repaid over 30 years, at 5% interest requires a \$4831.40 monthly payment.

The total monthly loan payment would be \$7828.49 or an average of \$260.95 per day.

### The Victory Inn

A \$150,000 startup loan for a down payment on the Victory Inn would require a monthly payment of \$4495.64.

A \$1,350,000 mortgage loan to buy the Victory Inn would require a monthly payment of \$6743.95.

Total, there would be loan payments of \$11239.59 per month or \$374.65 per day.

## 4.9 Estimates

Variable	Lower Limit	Upper Limit	Expected
$N$	6	20	10
$\alpha$	0	1	.5
$m$	20	150	100
$n$	1	$N - 2$	4
$k$ / day	0	10	2.5
$l$ / day	0	10	2.5
$w$ / month	\$5	\$100	\$25
$u$ / month	\$300	\$2000	\$750
$y$ / day	\$0	\$15	\$2
$x$ / day	\$5	\$20	\$5
$z$ / day	\$75	\$200	\$125

Table 1: Estimated Financial Projections

The largest cost on the Center will be the commercial mortgage, which is going to be around \$5,000 per month (possibly up to \$10,000, though), followed by the combined cost of normal maintenance, utilities, and taxes, another \$2,500 per month.

Outfitting a room for visitors will cost between \$1500 and \$2500.

## 5 The Summer Camp

One of the stated goals of the center is to demonstrate clearly and emphatically to both members of the community and to a wider audience that it is possible for members of all backgrounds to overcome prejudice and further their respective goals by working together on common interests. This includes the estranged relationship between members of different age groups as well as ethnic and economic groups. Adults and teenagers often view each other with suspicion and even contempt, and many adults still hold the damaging belief that children should be "seen and not heard"; as with other types of prejudice, this phenomenon is a result of social norms, and can be reduced significantly if the groups learn to appreciate each other and see that they can help each other reach their larger goals while working on smaller day-to-day projects together.

Ironically, it is largely as a result of this problem that it will be difficult to attract children and adolescents to the center at first. Additionally, the limited monetary means and the decreased access to transportation as well as the fact that many students have grown to despise learning after the damaging social and academic environment of most schools will further contribute to the challenge. Thus, a unique strategy must be used to attract members of this group. A summer overnight camp that shares the facilities and resources of the rest of the center both accomplishes this goal and provides an additional significant source of income for the center.

### 5.1 General Outline

The summer camp will be a coed sleepaway camp for ages 8-17 based on principles of the self-reliance and autonomy of all people, including children. When children are told which activities to participate and when and how to do so, they grow to dislike the activities – this can be readily observed in most public school classrooms in America; when they are given the freedom to make their own choices and pursue their own goals within a framework that allows them to do so with as much or as little guidance as they want, they learn more effectively and enjoy doing so.

Some of the principles of the summer camp are based on French Woods Performing Arts Camp in upstate New York, which has the following set-up: each day, there are six activity periods, three "majors" and three "minors." Children choose their majors at the beginning of each three-week session and go to them each day with the same teacher and students, and receive a large amount of instruction with the goal of significantly improving their ability in the activity. Minors are chosen at breakfast each morning, and are an opportunity to get a small informal introduction to an area of interest. While French Woods began as a performing arts camp, it has branched out and now offers a wide variety of activities. Currently, about 150 activities are available each period. Both majors and minors include



activities such as piano lessons, computer programming, gymnastics, and Shakespearean acting. No activities are required, but students have to participate in some activity during each period.

The camp at the learning center would further expand on the concept of freedom and responsibility by allowing campers to have complete control over whether they go to activities and participate in not only learning but also teaching classes, just like the rest of the learning center community. They would be actively involved in the learning center community and encouraged to take part in making decisions relating to the way the camp is run within the larger setting of the learning center by participating in camp meetings.

## 5.2 Schedule

Time	Monday, Wednesday, Friday	Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday
7 - 9:00 am	Breakfast Served	
9 - 10:00 am	First Regular	Third Regular
10 - 11:00 am	Elective	Elective
11 - 12:00 pm	Second Regular	Fourth Regular
12 - 1:00 pm	Lunch Served/Break	
1 - 5:00 pm	Seminars/Crafts	
5 - 7:00 pm	Dinner Served/Break	
7 - 9:30 pm	Evening Activities (performances, group activities, games, movies, etc.)	
9:30 - 10:30 pm	Snack/Discussion with Counselor	

Table 2: Schedule for Camp Activities

On Saturday and Sunday, a variety of activities will be planned, such as camping, beach, area activities, trips, museums, etc. Some activities will be overnight, but the majority will be day trips. Preferably, at least two options will be available at any time. On Sunday nights, there will be a meeting for the entire camp where concerns and ideas can be voiced. Weekend meals will be flexible and the times will depend on the planned activities. As on weekdays, three meals and a snack will be provided. On all days, fruits and vegetables will be available throughout the day free of charge, and additional snacks may also be available.

## 5.3 Nightly Bunk Discussions

On Monday through Friday, dinner will be accompanied by a short, engaging presentation by a speaker. The topic could range from current events to media technology to environmental issues. These speakers either be regular teachers, counselors, or campers or special guests.

During snack time, these talks will be discussed in the bunks with the counselor. This will

be a time for informal and animated discussion and will teach campers to speak and listen as well as learn about a variety of unusual topics. Discussion need not remain on topic – the topics are mainly useful as a starting off point to engage campers in interesting conversation. Counselors should mediate the conversation and be empathetic listeners.

This is also a good time for campers to voice concerns about camp life and activities to the counselors so they can be addressed to the directors if necessary in between the weekly camp meetings. (Campers can always speak to the directors on their own, but it will not always be necessary for minor issues.)

## **5.4 General Policies**

Campers will be asked both on a questionnaire prior to the beginning of camp and during snacktime discussions what types of activities they might enjoy, both for regulars and seminars and for weekend trips.

All activities are optional, but counselors will be assigned to a small group of children and will be responsible for casually observing their behavior. Any child who seems to be disinterested in the activities that are available will be asked what can be improved to make him/her enjoy the experience more. If the child claims to be happy not participating, no action will be taken. Under no circumstances will a child be punished for not participating in any activity.

## **5.5 Facilities and Resources**

The camp would share facilities and resources with the learning center as a whole. Campers would be in classes normally attended by the entire community. Campers of all ages would also be allowed to teach seminars after the first week and teach regulars after the first session, and these would be available to the community as well as to other campers.

## **5.6 Counselors and Bunks**

Campers would be arranged in bunks of 6-10 with a counselor. Bunks will separated be arranged by age, as is typical at most camps, but instead assigned randomly. This will further the goal of bridging age gaps and cause campers to form close interdependent relationships based on the different roles and responsibilities that will naturally fall into place. Also, there will not be the typical heirarchy that exists as a result of age-dependent distribution. Children of different ages have different skills and interests. A random distribution will ensure that skills and interests will be divided more evenly.

Counselor applicants must be able to teach classes in at least two but preferably three fields of interest. Counselors will be selected through an application process that includes a minimum of paperwork. The first round will be a simple form with the opportunity to enclose any additional information relevant to the counselor's field of interest or teaching experience, such as videos, portfolios, theatre resumes, etc. Applicants who seem to have the skills, attitude, and responsible nature necessary for this type of job will be invited for an in-depth interview. At the interview, applicants will be asked to teach a prepared half-hour lesson on a topic of their choice for the director of the camp.

When a list of potential counselors is assembled, information about what types of activities might be offered will be mailed to prospective campers who will indicate which activities seem most interesting. Then, counselors will be chosen accordingly.

## 5.7 Specifics and Financial Plan

These sections need additional research, and will be developed in a later proposal.

## 6 Conclusion and the Next Step

The next step is to find appropriate people to join me in this venture.

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