

Report on Libraries Outreach Activity: Dance Party! @ Odegaard

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Dance Party! @ Odegaard | Saturday, September 23, 2017 | 9:00 pm - 12:00 am

Dance party in the library?? See Odegaard Library's beautiful atrium transformed into a dance club with professional lighting, great tunes by DJ Carter, and free snacks! Celebrate the new school year in style!

Goals and Outcomes

1. Create a fun, welcoming and positive library event for new undergraduate first year students.
2. Promote Odegaard Library as an academic and social resource for first year students.

Partners

First Year Programs
UW Libraries Advancement

Resources

Funding

Funds spent on refreshments, decorations, DJ, giveaways including glowsticks, custodial staff, security, Harry the Husky, professional furniture movers, and stage delivery fees. Funding was provided by the UW Parents Collections and Programs Endowed Fund, First Year Programs, and partial sponsorship by Costco, Bartell's, and Coca-Cola.

Planning Committee

Emily Ruder, Linda Whang, Emilie Vrbancic, Harry Murphy, Doug Herstad, Jinny Sanders, Olivia Henney and Julie Cruse.

Event Staff

6 Odegaard Library staff, 2 LT staff, 1 OWRC staff, 1 OWRC student, 4 LT students, 4 Research & Learning Services GAs, 50 Dawg Daze Leaders



Photo credits: Odegaard Library staff

Activity Overview

The overall goal of the Dance Party event was to foster a welcoming and positive student experience within the library and also highlight the academic and social sides of Odegaard Library. Assessment of the event included headcounts, student comments, observations and photo documentation, and staff reflection.

During the three hour dance party, we welcomed approximately 1,800 students into the library. As with the 2016 Dance Party, we reached our maximum capacity of around 800 students early on in the party. There was a long line of waiting students that reached out into Red Square for nearly the duration of the dance party. There was a steady flow of students entering and leaving the building and the party finished strong with hundreds of students still dancing right at midnight. The DJ, himself a UW student, kept the crowd energized throughout the night and had a great effect on the level of energy and fun in the building. First Year Program Dawg Daze Student Leader volunteers were invaluable in not only helping run the dance party, but in creating a welcoming atmosphere for students -- shouting "welcome to Odegaard!" and handing out glowstick necklaces to students upon arrival at the dance party.

We solicited student feedback about the dance party and Odegaard through a short paper survey and whiteboard questions. Overall, student's reactions and responses were enthusiastically positive to the dance party, "It's a lit library!". Though the student comments and observation assessment, students connected with each other in the library, dancing, laughing, forming new friend groups, taking photos with each other in the dance party photo installation or on their personal phone cameras. In surveying students at the dance party what they like most about Odegaard Library they most liked Odegaard's design "the library is very modern and beautiful," technology "all the computers," the variety of study spaces "private study rooms," resources and books "all the books I like to read are here," and Odegaard's 24 hours "basically always open." In asking students what they were most looking forward to as a new student, they were most enthusiastic about making new friends "all the new friends!," their UW education "taking cool classes in my intended major," the college

experience “exploring campus,” and their own personal development and freedom. The dance party helps students see the library as both an academic space and a social space to connect with peers.

Observations, photo documentation, and staff reflection uncovered how students utilized the space throughout the night. The dance floor was packed for the entire night, and some students who may have wanted to dance couldn't fit in the designated dancing area. Other spaces such as the cafe and the seating areas in front of the Active Learning Classrooms were used continuously. Students were seen talking to friends in small groups, cooling off and taking a break from dancing, and enjoying snacks. The atrium seating area, used extensively by students not dancing at the 2016 Dance Party, was filled with students waiting in line to have their photo taken as part of the photo installation; observation assessment showed that some students were impatient waiting in line for photos and there was a missed opportunity for socializing in small groups. A long line of students were waiting outside the building to get into the party, some waiting as long as 1.5-2 hours -- the Dawg Daze student leader volunteers, Harry the Husky, and the photo installation visualized on the outside of Odegaard building were a small step in keeping students entertained while waiting outside. Community building was evident throughout the night as students were seen introducing themselves to other students, shaking hands, and exchanging phone numbers.

Staff reflection identified many ways of improving the planning process and student experience for the event, including ideas for addressing the long lines inside and outside the building. Improvements were made to the 2017 Dance Party, based on experiences from the 2016 Dance Party: improved assessment methods and better training for event duties and safety precautions was provided by members of the planning committee to staff and student volunteers, improving the event coordination and the volunteer experience.

Conclusions

Given the assessment evidence, it is clear that the Dance Party was successful in promoting Odegaard Library as a fun, student-centered, and engaging space. During Dawg Daze students are overwhelmed with information about the university, extracurricular activities, and college life. By hosting the Dance Party, Odegaard Library is positioning itself to welcome students and show them that the library is not only here for their academic needs, but can also serve as a place in which they can belong, socialize, and find community.

The effort and skill of the planning team and First Year Programs was essential in putting on a successful event. The staff time and effort needed to plan and execute the event was very extensive, but it is outweighed by the high impact and value to first year undergraduate students. The planning team piloted a new partnership with Libraries Advancement to secure sponsorships with local businesses which helped to offset some cost of the Dance Party. The support from First Year Programs was essential in making this event a success. FYP promoted the Dance Party as a key Dawg Daze event, contributed refreshments, paid for the DJ, and provided event help through their enthusiastic Dawg Daze Student Leader Volunteers. The long line of students waiting outside for the duration of the 2017 Dance Party negatively impacted the student experience with the event; an additional Red Square experience for students may help address the fact that Odegaard Library first floor building capacity is limited and not large enough for all first year students.

Recommendations & Resources Requested

We recommend holding the Dance Party again for Dawg Daze 2018. In order to support this event, we ask that the following recommendations and requests be taken into consideration:

- Continue partnering with First Year Programs to plan and market the Dance Party.
- Funding be provided by the UW Libraries for refreshments, decorations and building needs, such as professional movers and custodial services. Continue working with UW Libraries Advancement and FYP to secure sponsorships for funding or in-kind gifts.
- Continue to encourage participation of staff members from across Libraries branches and departments.
- To address the limited capacity of the Odegaard Library first floor for the dance party, First Year Programs or an additional UW unit may wish to create an additional Red Square experience for students. In the marketing of the Dance Party, there is also a need to offset student expectations that all first year students can attend the dance party starting at 9pm.
- If the photo installation continues next year, move it outside of the Odegaard building to create more space for students to socialize in Odegaard. The photo installation could perhaps take place on Red Square, or could be installed as part of another Dawg Daze event, like the Tech Fair.

Previous Outreach Reports

- [Report on Libraries Outreach Activity: Dance Party 2016](#)