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Colleges and Universities Across the Country Embrace Wayfinding

A recent study reveals that higher education venues benefit from emerging trends in on-campus navigation

Traverse City, MI — A recent study of nine major campuses across the country by Michigan-based Corbin found that more and more colleges and universities are using emerging wayfinding techniques to better direct students and visitors to campus destinations and increase the synergy between campus offerings. Of the major campuses that recently implemented new wayfinding strategies, all revealed the programs resulted in such things as increased enrollment, more successful campus venues and activities, improved campus safety, and an increase in the effectiveness of the on-campus information continuum. Corbin, a leader in the field of environmental graphic design, conducted the recent study of wayfinding and signage programs at Penn State University, Wayne State University, North Carolina State University, Ferris State University, The University of Michigan, Marquette University, Oakland University, IUPUI, and the University of Virginia.

“Competition for new students has never been greater,” said Jeffry Corbin, president of Corbin. “Wayfinding information is one of the most important components of the expanding information continuum.”

The study found that in most cases the impetus for implementing new wayfinding - defined as the orderly structuring and presentation of information required to help people access places and information – came directly from the institution’s governing boards themselves. Campus leaders are adding wayfinding to the list of planning priorities in order to add and improve the more experience-oriented aspects throughout the campus environment.

“Colleges and universities must provide the type of information students and visitors want when they want it if they are to continue to be successful,” Corbin says. “Campus wayfinding reflects the institution’s concern for creating a more visitor-friendly experience for its students, staff and visitors.”

The findings also cited the importance of creating an inviting environment for students and visitors is second only to providing a useful educational program. An effective wayfinding system was also found to reinforce the university or college “brand”, visually define the campus boundaries, celebrate a person’s arrival, unify the various parts of the campus, and create a safer environment.

Colleges and universities today are, in effect, engaged in many “businesses,” ranging from higher education, to continuing education, athletics, summer camps and seminars, research, and partnerships with industry.

Enhancing the informational continuum through better signage can help students and the growing variety of visitors to realize the availability of these many activities and increase the synergy between them.

“The lack of information is a hindrance — particularly to our youth who are so well equipped to deal with large amounts of information,” adds Corbin. “People are losing patience with institutions who aren’t informing their audiences sufficiently about their physical facilities. There is no excuse today for not being able to find one’s desired destination, especially on a college or university campus.”

Visuals are available upon request.

Jeffrey Corbin’s vision of a changing educational landscape led him to found Corbin, an environmental graphic design firm based in Traverse City, Michigan, in 1976. Since then, the firm has completed hundreds of projects for governmental, medical, educational and business clients across the country. Corbin’s expanding scope of projects includes signage and wayfinding, interactive systems, Web sites, identity systems and print communications — all of them based on the philosophy of “access=success”. A partial list of Corbin’s civic wayfinding programs includes Downtown Indianapolis; Madison, Wisconsin; Columbus, Indiana; Vail, Colorado; Tucson, Arizona; and Los Angeles, California. Other wayfinding clients include Swedish Medical Center in Seattle, Clarian Health in Indianapolis, University Health Network in Toronto, Milton S. Hershey Medical Center in Hershey, Pennsylvania, and Recreational Equipment Inc. (REI). Additional information about the firm can be found online at: www.corbindesign.com

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