

Multi-Faith Prayer and Wellness Room Proposal for the BC Library

In summer of 2023, students began requesting use of the Bill Thomas room in the Grace Van Dyke Bird Library for prayer. While this surprised library staff as it was not communicated to us beforehand, we sought to accommodate these students and would open the room as long as it was not already in use. However, the library does not control booking of the room and cannot reserve it unlike study rooms and L217. During this time, the librarians researched the use of the library for such a space, and found that [students looking for a spiritual space on campus prefer central location, convenience, and proximity to spaces they already use](#). The BC Library meets all these preferences, and with an average of 101 students in the library at any given time and more open hours than most student-facing spaces on campus such as the Dining Commons and Student Health, may meet them better than any other campus building.

Since last summer, we have had 59 prayer room requests logged in our analytics- and likely much more usage than that number shows, since students will often use one after another or go in if the door is unlocked if they have been allowed usage of the space before. With this informal practice in place, and given the high usage of the library with the most hours to accommodate students on campus, the librarians are proposing the addition of a designated prayer and wellness space to be constructed within the library. Such a space aligns well with our other efforts to meet students' personal needs in addition to academic ones, with our semesterly De-Stress Fest, free distribution of menstrual products and hygiene kits, and participatory passive programming such as our puzzle area and affirmations wall.

Best practices for work or campus prayer rooms have been established, as this is not a new concept. We are recommending the use of temporary cubicle walls (of which we are in possession) to construct a space at least 4x2 feet but preferably 8x4. To accommodate multiple faith traditions and wellness practices, the space will contain a small table, chair, and cubbies for shoe removal. On each wall, signage will indicate a cardinal direction to assist those faiths who require it. We are seeking to partner with the Office of Student Life in this effort by requesting a small grant for funding the cubby and several small communal items for the space. We also hope to have their support in marketing this space and for communicating student buy-in in tandem with this proposal from the library perspective. For placement of the space, we recommend either the second floor near existing study rooms in the back, or on the first floor in Computer Commons where the former zoom space was set up. We will seek input from the Office of Student Life and administration as well on determining the best location based on findability and space constraints.

The following page contains a policy draft for this wellness space, to be edited and adapted as required by BC leadership and with input from the Office of Student Life. It has been adapted from several existing policies for similar spaces on other college campuses ([Lincoln College Oxford](#), [University of San Diego's School of Law](#), and [Pacific Lutheran University](#)). Whether or not the library is ultimately chosen to host such a space, we believe that an addition of such a location on campus would contribute positively overall to campus culture, individual student growth, and the holistic education of BC students.

[DRAFT] Guidelines for the Multi-Faith Prayer and Wellness Space

This room is an inclusive and welcoming space for members of the BC community of diverse religious, spiritual and non-religious backgrounds and practices. In order to designate this room as a space intended for prayer, contemplation, meditation, reflection and practice, we ask users to follow these guidelines:

1. This multi-faith prayer and quiet room is a silent, mixed-gender and mixed-faith space for all students of the College. A maximum number of four students may use this space at the same time.
2. It is a space for silent prayer and contemplation for individual use, not for group use. If you need a group study space, please see staff at the circulation desk downstairs.
3. Users of this space must respect these rules:
 - Please do not remove or add items of furniture.
 - If you wish to use any personal items of religious practice (including written materials, pictures or other objects), please take them away with you once you are done.
 - Signs point the way to North, South, East, and West as an aid to locating Qibla and other directions.
 - Please keep usage of this room to a maximum of 30 minutes per session when others are waiting for the space.
 - Please keep noise to a minimum:
 - Music, chanting and singing are not permitted in this room.
 - No general conversations; this is a space for silent prayer and contemplation.
 - No mobile phone calls or use of other devices, except when using headphones for guided meditation or other similar wellness practices.
 - If you wish to take off your shoes, kindly place them on the shoe rack near the entrance.
 - No eating or drinking.
 - No candles, incense or naked flames of any kind are to be used.
 - Please respect different faith backgrounds when you use the space- no leafleting or collecting of money without permission.
 - Once you have finished using the room, please change the sign to “OPEN” if you are the last to leave.

If you have any questions about the policy of this room, please contact the library chair:
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