

UNIVERSITY OF WALES AT CAERLEON NEWPORT

A COMBINATION OF OUT-SOURCED AND IN-HOUSE EXPERTISE HAS PRODUCED NEW CATERING FACILITIES WHICH ARE GETTING EXCEPTIONAL RESPONSE FROM THE CUSTOMERS. MIKE SAWYER VISITED THE CAMPUS.



It took both sides of FCSI expertise to resolve the issue of catering for the University of Wales.

Andrew Etherington FCSI, of Andrew Etherington Associates provided management consulting to help the university plan the future for its catering facilities.

Etherington carried out a management survey to determine future trends, throughput, product selection and the type of customer who would be using the University refectory.

Interviews were conducted with the complete spectrum of refectory customers from the University's Vice Chancellor to students themselves. This was combined with the University's own research on its function and event customers to produce a clear picture of future demand on the refectory facilities.

FCSI kitchen design consultant Jackie Snaith, of Chapel Foodservice Consultants took the existing floor plan of facilities and designed a bright and contemporary new refectory to fit the future requirements of the University.

Unusually for a project of this kind, the FCSI input ended there. The University's own in-house design team then took the prepared refectory designs from approval through project management to the final completion.

"We were keen to ensure that the end product – the new refectory – was what our customers wanted and that it would serve us well for many years," says Simon Bray BSc (Hons), Head of Events Services, University of Wales, Newport.

"The old refectory was tired and out of date and the project to build a new one has been a fantastic combination of in-house and out-sourced expertise.

"We have a range of customers from students, to staff to external clients for events and functions. And like all universities we are keen to ensure a good income and throughput at manageable levels. So rather than guess as to what the future will hold – or use past trends which are changing all the time – we decided to go to a consultant that knows the trends in university catering and who could come up with a thorough study and provide us with conceptual designs that our own in-house design team could follow through.

"Andrew and his colleagues gave us the bones and our own

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design team worked with myself, the catering manager and an architect. The design team proved more than capable of carrying the project through to completion.

“The response from our customers has been exceptional and my job is to ensure that we deliver the service to match the facility.”

As a result of Etherington’s throughput survey, a new café/delicatessen bar has been added to the refectory, offering a speedy meal and snack service. This features its own dedicated seating area for approximately 60.

Adjacent to the deli counter is the new servery area, featuring new counters, till point, ambient and chilled display cabinets and a beverage dispense area. The kitchen itself is behind the servery and no work was required here.

A new 200-seat dining room completes the picture. Bray is particularly proud of the partition system specified by the FCSI consultants. “It gives us a range of options to use the space and that is the key to what we wanted.

“We were looking for a clean, funky, student orientated facility that still allowed the refectory to serve our 665 staple meals to residential students. We will be able to comfortably serve 1,000 people in one meal time via the main servery and the deli counter.”

During the summer break, the University hosted conferences and events – the largest of which was for 1500 police.

“We are very strong with the association market,” says Bray. “The Statistics Office, Police, the Patents Office and other educational establishments use us a lot. And that market is becoming more and more discerning so it was essential to

upgrade our facilities.” Marquees also provide a valuable option to cater for additional numbers. Outside the front of the main university building, the large area of lawn can hold two 1,000 cover marquees, most recently used for the student graduation ceremony. Foodservice here is supplied via trolleys from the main kitchen and the University offers everything from a buffet to family and silver service meals.

The University is based on two sites – at Caerleon and Allt-yr-nop at Newport, within a mile of the centre of Wales’ newest city.

The main Caerleon campus overlooks the picturesque Usk Valley and offers some 450 fully furnished single rooms – all en suite. A variety of meeting and function rooms are available – from teaching rooms holding 35 theatre-style to the Sports Hall which can hold 1,100 in the same style, or 450 for a seated function.

“It was vital to increase our throughput and Andrew has helped us achieve this greater efficiency of service, alongside the flexibility to cater for corporate clients in a facility that should serve us well for the next 10-15 years. It is very important when dealing with FCSI consultants that you give them a good remit and they certainly came up with the goods we required.”

University of Wales Conference and Hospitality Services
<http://conference.newport.ac.uk> Consultants: www.fcsi.org.uk

