

## UNIVERSITY OF OLIVET- CUTLER STUDENT UNION

Olivet, Michigan



The Cutler Student Center at the University of Olivet was designed to be the central hub of campus life, serving as a focal point for student programming and a daytime activity space for students. This multi-functional facility incorporates dining, recreation, and meeting spaces, establishing itself as a vital resource for both residential and commuter students. With this project, the university aimed to enhance the overall student experience by offering modern amenities, new dining options, and spaces for social connection.

The project originated from a need to centralize campus activities and address gaps in amenities. Before the addition of the student center, food options were limited to the main cafeteria and a small coffee shop, providing no retail foodservice options for students. Additionally, the campus lacked space for larger gatherings and a dedicated area where commuter students could spend their downtime. This center would not only provide these much needed services, but would also create job opportunities for students, both in retail dining and behind the scenes in catering operations.

### Details

Opening Date: January 2024

Equipment Cost: \$835,163

Project Size: 3,076 SF

### Scope

The center features a vibrant retail dining area with late-night options, a coffee/dessert venue, a 300-seat ballroom, and a dedicated student lounge. It also includes a strategically designed catering kitchen to support both on-site and campus-wide events.

The centerpiece of the retail dining area, Tu Taco, was developed in collaboration with Chartwells, the campus foodservice operator. It functions as a flexible and internally branded concept offering vibrant, late-night dining options inspired by student preferences. Complementing this is a coffee and dessert venue, catering to early morning and late-night needs. Efficiency and adaptability define the design, incorporating self-order kiosks and systems supporting pre-order and pick-up options, which streamline operations and reduce labor demands.

Crafted with precision, the kitchen offers open sight lines through a viewing window that connects the back-of-house with the front, promoting both transparency and operational efficiency. Equipped with multifunctional appliances, it supports a diverse menu while optimizing the limited space. Sustainable design elements, such as automated fresh and used oil systems and variable volume hoods, further enhance operational efficiency and reduce energy consumption.

The building also serves as a vital resource for campus-wide events, housing a 300-seat ballroom supported by a catering kitchen with direct access to a loading dock and catering spaces. This configuration enables seamless service for both on-site and campus-wide events, addressing previous limitations in catering operations.

The Cutler Student Center encapsulates the university's vision of fostering an inclusive and vibrant campus culture. Its innovative design, versatile offerings, and student-focused amenities have made it a cornerstone of campus life, earning praise from stakeholders and delivering on its promise to elevate the student experience.

