



THE ALWAYS OPEN INITIATIVE

Extending the Library Hours at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Presented By: Ava Wells, Yubin Kim, Matthew Greene,

Matthew Agudelo, Emma Olson

Presented To: Doug Diesenhaus, Interim Associate University Librarian for

Administration Services

July 22, 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
RECOMMENDATION REPORT	2
INTRODUCTION	2
METHODS	3
RESULTS	3
ANALYSIS	3
CONCLUSION	4
RECOMMENDATIONS	5

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

The Always Open Initiative at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill aims to address the limitations of current library hours, which fail to meet student needs. Our research, conducted through a combination of in-person and online surveys, revealed a strong demand for extending library hours. This report outlines our findings and provides recommendations for extending library hours to a 24/5 schedule. Our policies are designed to enhance student access to essential academic resources at UNC libraries.

The purpose of our research was to:

- Understand student body concerns relating to library hours.
- Collect information through a variety of research methods.
- Recommend appropriate solutions that address the lack of overnight library hours.

By utilizing both in-person and field research, our collected data provided plenty of relevant information regarding student attitudes toward a 24-hour library. Through this research, we have compiled a summary of our conclusions and have provided policy recommendations.

Conclusions

- 1. UNC students would prefer that the library hours be extended.** With 58 responses, the results of our online survey showed that 91.3% (42) of respondents would prefer for the library's hours to be extended to 24/7.
- 2. Most students utilize the library's late-night features, but primarily during the weekdays.** 50% (29) of respondents said they utilized the library at night, with an additional 41.4% (24) of respondents saying that they used it during the afternoons. Additionally, 81% (47) of students said that they primarily go to the library during the weekdays. The concluding results encourage a shift in hours: 24 hours a day, five days a week.
- 3. Most students prefer Davis Library, but the Undergraduate Library also acts as a viable option.** 70.7% (41) of respondents said they prefer visiting Davis library. However, 15.5% (9) of respondents said that they visit the UL, which is important considering that the UL was the previous 24/7 library option, before COVID-19.

Recommendations

- 1. Implement a trial period for extending library hours.** To allow for the adequate assessment of demand and the feasibility of the adjusted schedule, UNC should implement a trial period for one regular semester (such as the fall semester) for extending library hours to 24 hours a day from Monday through Friday.

2. **Extend library hours to 24/5 at the Undergraduate Library (UL).** Once the trial period has proven to be successful, UNC should permanently adjust the hours of the UL to 24/5 on weekdays since the UL has previously been the 24/7 library before the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. **Spread awareness of the extended hours plan.** UNC should develop a communication plan to spread awareness about the changes, using multiple channels to ensure maximum reach and engagement. This includes utilizing social media platforms, university newsletters, and the official website to announce the new change, explain the benefits, and justify the costs involved.

RECOMMENDATION REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has thirteen libraries and designated study spaces, yet none of these locations offer 24-hour access. The libraries are an important facet of the academic environment on campus, especially for students who must use late-night-hours at libraries like Davis, which is open until 2 am. Students who have a demanding schedule, balance school and work, or simply prefer to work late at night, are affected by the lack of extended library hours on campus.

The Always Open Initiative conducted in-person and online surveys that gauged the needs of UNC students, specifically on whether or not they would utilize an extension of the current library hours. The following report outlines our research methods and findings, as well as recommended solutions that suggest extending the hours of operation to 24 hours, five days a week, which would be substantially beneficial to the student-body at UNC Chapel Hill.



Figure 1. Davis Library (William Yeung, Flickr, 2013)

METHODS

Using a mixed methods approach, we split up into two groups and surveyed people at the most popular libraries on campus: Davis and Undergraduate. Collecting data in person allowed us to interact with participants by seeing their facial expressions and finding out how they reacted to the possibility of a 24/5 hour library. This method also provided us with the ability to receive immediate feedback and clarification.

After completing the in-person surveys, we posted an online survey for those not on campus. We designed it to be clear and not take much of the participant's time. This part of our approach allowed us to reach more people and gather diverse results. These two methods allowed us to collect data through a strong mixed methods approach.

RESULTS

When we closed our survey, we received 58 responses. Combined with 17 in-person responses, this brought our total to 78. From our data, we noticed a few trends. 85% of students used the library during finals more than the rest of the semester. 91% studied more during the afternoons and nights as opposed to mornings. Most students used one library in particular with 71% of students choosing Davis. Surprisingly, when we asked how long each individual spent at the library, responses varied. 28.8% (17) of respondents said they spend 2-3 hours at the library, 33.9% (20) said they spend 3-4 hours, and an additional 20.3% (12) of respondents said five hours or more. Nevertheless, a majority of results aligned with what we (AOI) believe to be true: UNC students would prefer an extension of the library's hours.

ANALYSIS

Based on the results, an overwhelming majority of respondents tended to study at Davis Library, with an equal number of respondents using either the first floor or the study rooms. However, the other majority of respondents tended to study at the UL, which was a 24-hour library before the COVID-19 pandemic. This data provides two possible libraries to consider keeping open. Additionally, because most students do not use Safewalk and probably wouldn't if library hours were extended, we would not have to coordinate with Safewalk to do so, which eliminates an additional barrier to overcome when proposing our solutions.

Another overwhelming majority of respondents tended to visit the library more during weekdays than weekends, which supports our proposal to keep the library open every weekday and normal/current operations on weekends. However, if funding allows, weekday hours could be extended to weekends during finals season, since 86% of respondents reported using the libraries more during finals season than other parts of the semester. Depending on which library implements these extended hours, this also eliminates the issue of needing more space to accommodate all students even during extended hours, since the UL only has two floors and Davis operations may be limited to the first two floors.

Comparatively, do you find yourself going to the library more during finals than during the regular parts of the semester?

58 responses

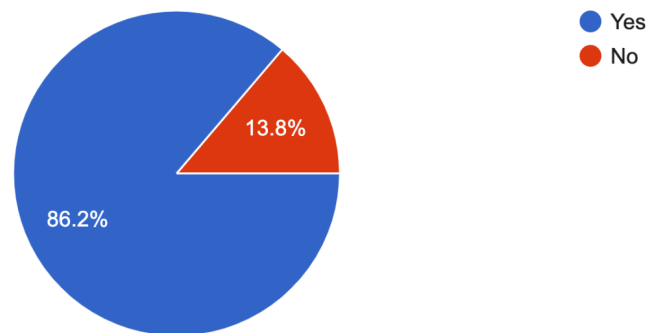


Figure 2. Results from our online survey that determines the influx of students who visit the library during finals season.

Do you spend more time at the library during the weekends or the weekdays?

58 responses

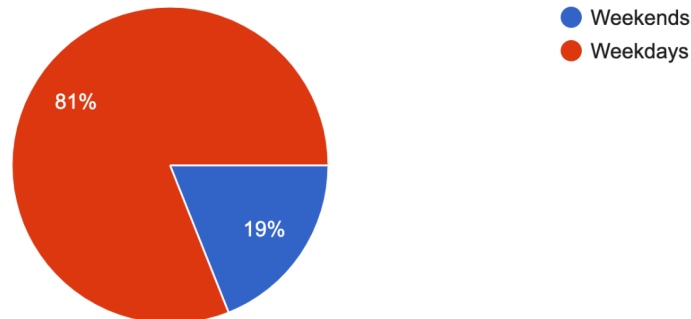


Figure 3. Results from our online survey that determines when students visit the library the most.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the Always Open Initiative highlight the need for extended library hours at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Combining both in-person and online surveys, we gathered a comprehensive understanding of student needs and preferences. The results indicate that the current library hours are insufficient for many students, particularly those who balance demanding schedules and prefer studying at night.

An overwhelming majority of respondents strongly preferred extending the library hours to a 24/5 schedule. This extension would cater to the needs of 85% of respondents who increase their library usage during finals, and the 91% who primarily study in the afternoons and nights. Additionally, respondents' preference for Davis Library and their familiarity with the Undergraduate Library's previous 24-hour operations schedule present viable options for extended hours. Finally, extending library hours would increase student productivity, promote engagement with library materials that students may not otherwise use, and eliminate the common "technology/computer issue" excuse for turning in assignments late by allowing students access to public computers.

Do you think the library hours should be extended to 24/7?

46 responses

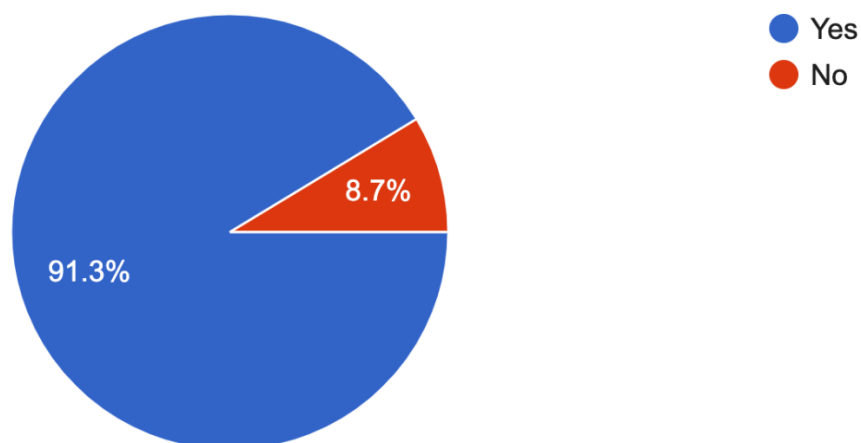


Figure 4. Results from our online survey that conclude whether the library should be open 24/7.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Implement a trial period for extending library hours.** The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill should implement a trial period for extending the library hours of Davis Library to 24 hours a day from Monday through Friday for one semester. This would allow for an adequate assessment of demand and the feasibility of the adjusted schedule.
 - a. **Costs:** The trial period will increase operational and facility costs, including the need for more cleaning and security staff. These costs could lead to an increase in student fees or necessitate reallocation of university budget resources. Paying staff

extended hours plan. This strategy should utilize multiple channels to ensure maximum reach and engagement.

- a. **Costs:** The primary costs associated with this recommendation are minimal. There might be some resistance or negative feedback from students if they are not properly informed about the reasons for any fee increases associated with the extended hours.
- b. **Benefits:** A well-executed communication strategy will increase awareness and understanding among students about the benefits and availability of extended library hours. This can help recruit additional student workers to support the extended hours and mitigate staffing concerns. Enhanced student support and engagement will lead to better utilization of library resources and improved academic outcomes.
- c. **Action Plan:** Utilize social media platforms, university newsletters, and the official website to announce the extended hours and explain the benefits. Include detailed information in formal notices and emails regarding any changes in student fees. Host informational sessions and Q&A forums to address student concerns and gather feedback. Partner with student organizations to amplify the message and encourage peer-to-peer promotion. Additionally, visual aids such as infographics and data representations can be used to further highlight the importance and benefits of the extended hours plan.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Doherty, B. “SafeWalkers make nights more secure. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.” (2023, December 20).

<https://www.unc.edu/discover/safewalkers-make-nights-more-secure/>

Library.unc.edu. “Locations and hours.” July 18, 2024. <https://library.unc.edu/hours/>

Office of State Personnel. *Dictionary of Career-banding Terms*. (2009).

https://files.nc.gov/ncoshr/documents/CB/CB_Terms_Dictionary.pdf

Reddit.com. “Why is the library not open 24 hours during finals week?” [*Online forum post*].

(2023, December). Reddit. Retrieved July 7, 2024, from

https://www.reddit.com/r/UNC/comments/187tp7r/why_is_the_library_not_open_24_hours_during/

Rodriguez, A. “Column: Students need study spaces on weekend evenings.” (2024, March 25).

<https://www.dailytarheel.com/article/2024/03/opinion-library-early-closures>

UNC System Office. (n.d.). *UNC System Office SHRA Career Banding Salary Ranges*.

<https://hr.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/222/2024/03/2024-CB-Rates.pdf>

Yeung, W. (2013). *Davis Library at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

[Photograph]. Flickr. x