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Beautification on Campus

The mark of many great colleges is the greatness of, not only the faculty, facilities, and staff, but also the grounds.

While it can't be argued that Pensacola State has its fair share of green spaces and courtyards, the difference lies in design and use. The vast majority of the green spaces around our campus are nothing more than just that, green spaces.

According to the University of Washington, effectively designed green spaces provide a great number of health and educational benefits. They encourage walking and free-time exercise, which improves physical health. Moreover, they allow for comfortable time spent in the outdoors and fresh air, which improves mental health and reduces stress. Furthermore, they allow for quieter, and safer spaces, to discuss and share ideas and thoughts with others or with oneself, which improves educational achievement.

However, unlike many city parks and other college greens, with few exceptions, our college's courtyards are devoid of flowers and a diverse choice of foliage.

Though many of the buildings have flower beds, flowers can only be found at a handful of buildings. Therefore, placing the burden of beautification to those primary buildings, such as the library and administration buildings. Instead of evening the labor upon the entire campus. While this may be a more wide-reaching task, it is nevertheless one with a noble goal.

In terms of trees, many of the greens are simply covered with tall pine trees, which occasionally dot the landscape. These pines provide little shade and a scarcity of interesting scenery, instead leaving us to stare at the scrawny tall trunks thereof.

The primary exception, in this regard, is the area around the Ashmore Auditorium. Herein, you may find a number of Southern Magnolias bringing grace to the landscape. However, beyond the reach of the auditorium's sphere of influence, you would be hard pressed to find a reliable canopy of shade trees.

Therefore, otherwise leaving us with only sunburns and sweltering walks between buildings.

However, the lack of natural beauty and shade is not the only issue arisen upon the grounds, for there is another clear and blantent fact. There are not enough places to sit.

Places to sit in a public park, such as benches and picnic tables, are essential to the design of that respective greenspace. Not only are they places to rest, but places to commune and socialize with classmates and neighbors.

However, that does not mean that their purpose wanes during pandemic times. Verily, benches also encourage people to exercise more, as they provide for an extra place to rest in-between workouts. On top of that, they encourage exercise due to the fact that they often act as achievable targets for runs and jogs.

Nevertheless though, throughout the campus, few spaces can be found to sit. There are picnic tables in front of the library and the student services building, but that's effectively it. Almost all of the remaining seats are either reserved for faculty and staff breaks or as designated smoking

areas. Therefore, making it a particular difficult issue for non-smoking students, who constitute a large number of individuals on campus, if not the majority thereof.

Despite these being relatively pressing issues, the solutions are not overly bearing. In fact, the solutions are quite simple.

In the mulched beds, plant flowers. In the courtyards and commons, plant a plethora of oaks and magnolias. Along the paths, plant benches, picnic tables, and trash cans.

Even before planting these items across campus, simple things such as actively repainting, maintaining, and replacing old signs, advertisements, and decorative items could easily improve the overall issue.

All of this together, while simple in action, will accrue great dividends in the health, mental strength, and educational achievement of students, staff, and faculty alike.