



THE PULSE GROUP

THE PULSE GROUP

## Integrated Resources Concept to Completion

Connecting people, ideas, market data and operational experience to provide a robust approach to food, retail and hospitality strategy, furthering the overall value proposition for universities and their stakeholders.

About Us

Projects

Clients

People





## Seeing the forest through the trees – that’s what we do.



**The Pulse Group** is a market research, economic consulting and strategic planning firm, which specializes in using customer, business and economic information together with competitive intelligence, to provide college and university clients with practical growth, positioning, development, contract and financial strategies related to their food and hospitality assets. We take great pride in the fact that since this company began in 1994, we have used our skills in research and planning to generate significantly higher levels of customer satisfaction for a wide range of services and help guide the design programs of some world-class facilities. Please visit our web site at [ThePulseGroup.org](http://ThePulseGroup.org) for a comprehensive profile of our firm, including examples of recently completed assignments.

The Pulse Group regularly works with colleges and universities to identify the market potential for various services and facilities. We are experts in competitive intelligence techniques, investigating industry best practices and evaluating demographic/economic data. Our projects normally involve in-depth research with customers and users, to better understand motivations for use, decision-making criteria, attitudes/perceptions and reactions to proposed concepts or services. In many cases we are asked to undertake financial analyses designed to test the economic viability of projects or provide contract advisory services, including RFP development, contractor selection/negotiation and advice/guidance with respect to contractor agreements.



**#Job 1** --- strategic development, operational & marketing recommendations aimed at increasing sales, enhancing profitability and promoting stronger customer satisfaction.

# our focus



## MARKET RESEARCH

Market analyses designed to identify market opportunities available for various projects and facilities, including survey research and focus groups to better understand purchasing motivations, decision-making criteria and attitudes or perceptions.



## STRATEGIC PLANNING

Studies focused on business improvement by understanding market trends and characteristics, competition, best practices and estimates of future potential – considering facilities, infrastructure, market factors, operational possibilities and financial resources.



## DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Concept definition, testing, refinement and strategic planning to assist in the translation of the results of the market analyses -- optimizing project facilities, services and financial resources toward producing economically viable "in demand" development plans.



## CONTRACT SERVICES

Contract advisory services. Including RFP development, contractor selection/negotiation, development of key performance indicators, performance benchmarking, contract performance evaluations and contract workouts/restructuring plans.



# projects

## YALE UNIVERSITY

### Strategic Planning & Facility Programming

The Pulse Group was retained by the Yale School of Management to collaborate with Foster + Partners, London in the development of the facilities program for all of the retail, hospitality and conference elements included in the new 230,000 square foot Yale Business School. Based on a market analysis of campus and community projects, we utilized future population estimates, to prepare a retail, hospitality and foodservice demand/financial analysis for the new building. Based upon our work, we prepared a written proto-type development program for the retail, hospitality, foodservice and conference related elements of the new SOM project. The program provided a detailed description of the characteristics of each recommended area and development parameters, in terms of space sizes and adjacencies.

## TUFTS UNIVERSITY

### STEM Conference Center Design Development

The Pulse Group is currently working with Tufts University and Stantec Architects to develop building plans for the conference, event, visitor and retail elements of the Joyce Cummings Center, a planned 140,000 square foot mixed-use academic and University “gateway” project to be located adjacent to an MBTA station, on the University’s main campus in Medford, Massachusetts, just outside Boston. The project will include “on demand” flex conference/event & academic space, a visitor tour showcase, a spirit oriented retail gallery, along with a café and areas for catering support. During the course of our work, we completed a competitive analysis of conference/event facilities; evaluated national best practices/trends in the meetings/conference market;; collaborated with architectural partners to create a highly efficient market/financial driven plan for the facility; and, provided advice/guidance with respect to managing/structuring event/conference operations

## KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

### Contract Advisory Services

The Pulse Group helped Kent State University evaluate its foodservice contract and strengthen its contract oversight/administration capabilities by creating a number of business and performance evaluation tools, including: a unit-based financial reporting system, master labor schedules, repair and maintenance procedures/protocols, customer market research tools, and a capital investment plan. As part of our work we also developed a financial model of the remaining (7) years of the contract, to assess financial benefits and identify areas of operational concern. Using the results of our work we helped the University draft its contract scope of services and dining program budget for fiscal 2020-2021.

# projects



## UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS -- AUSTIN

### Dining Master Plan & Strategic Planning

The Pulse Group was retained to undertake a comprehensive business review of the foodservice program at the University of Texas – Austin and provide strategic recommendations aimed at growing participation, building greater stakeholder satisfaction, creating better business efficiencies and enhancing program quality. As part of our work, we identified current trends affecting UT Austin as a dining market. Through interviews with key leadership and students, we focused on target issues, operational challenges, capabilities, available resources and opportunities for improvement. Using the information developed along with detailed financial analyses, we made a number of strategic business recommendations related to changes in meal plan structure, facility programming and business operations, including operational considerations connected to implementing a commuter meal plan. This year the voluntary commuter program developed will achieve more than \$1.0 million in sales.

## UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

### Contract Evaluation & Strategy

The Pulse Group collaborated with the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities to evaluate its existing foodservice management contract and provide a comparative analysis of the costs/benefits related to self-operation versus contract operation. As part of our work we conducted qualitative research with various segments of the UMTC campus community; designed and implemented a campus dining survey covering multiple campuses; collected/reviewed pertinent historical financial, operational and transactional performance data for more than (30) existing operations; developed best practices research for peer or aspirant institutions, for the purpose of creating a series of contract/self-operated case studies and a comparative assessment; and, prepared a proforma financial analysis for UMTC dining operations for a 5-year period, considering both self-operated and contract operational formats.

## DUKE UNIVERSITY

### Facility Renovation Planning

The Pulse Group was retained by Duke University to provide market analysis, development planning and financial advisory services in support of the renovation of the facilities at Sarah P. Duke Gardens (“SPDG”). SPDG is currently in the planning process for a \$30 million renovation of the Garden’s main facilities, which include event, conference, foodservice, catering and retail elements, along with administrative and educational space. As part of our work, we: conducted interviews with University stakeholders; designed and implemented online survey research with conference/event planners; undertook a competitive market analysis of regional event facilities; provided advice and guidance with respect to renovation development planning, toward creating greater market/financial efficiencies; and, developed a financial proforma illustrating the financial impact of our recommendations.

# projects



## CORNELL --SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

### Facility Renovation & Repositioning

The Pulse Group worked with the Cornell University School of Management to develop a renovation plan for the School's dining, catering and retail operations located on the first floor of Sage Hall. As part of our work,, we conducted (7) discussion groups, with students, faculty and staff. Based on the results of the groups, we developed and implemented an electronic survey and used it to create Personas of the various customer segments and test a range of design concepts. Using the research completed, we created several alternative renovation design concepts for a new dining marketplace and a coffee bar, including collaboration and event space. For the consensus alternative, we provided a schedule a major equipment, an estimated project budget by major lump sum category and a proposed furnishings plan. We also provided recommendations with respect to potential new dining concepts, menuing possibilities aimed at producing stronger utilization and ideas for a series of operating innovations/efficiencies targeted at generating higher satisfaction levels.

## CAL. STATE UNIVERSITY – LONG BEACH

### Student Union Concept Development & Renovation

The Pulse Group was retained by California State University -- Long Beach (CSULB) to assist them by conducting an operational review of their Student Union and campus-wide hospitality operations and developing a strategic plan for campus retail and foodservice facilities. As part of the project, we interviewed management personnel, reviewed the historical operating performance of each unit, conducted a detailed evaluation of facilities/equipment and examined typically weekly sales transactions. In addition, we conducted 8 focus groups, with various segments of the campus community and used the feedback to construct an Internet survey, which yielded responses from nearly 2100 persons. Based on the results of our on-site investigations, focus group research and survey research, we made a number of detailed recommendations for enhancing customer satisfaction, renovating/repositioning existing concepts, developing new concepts and revising operating formats/services to enhance efficiency/profitability.

## SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY

### Dining & Conference Expansion

The Pulse Group was retained by Santa Clara University, to evaluate the possibilities for expanding campus dining operations and to assess the feasibility of developing a multi-use conference center, with retail and dining elements. During the course of our work, analyzed various potential development sites, conducted best practices research with respect to other university related conference/event centers and interviewed more than 25 key University stakeholders with respect to event/meeting related activity. We also conducted discussion groups with a broad range of University segments and designed/implemented an internet survey that that mapped current dining behavior, tested satisfaction with existing choices and evaluated the potential for new dining concepts. Using the work described, we provided the University with strategic recommendations for the size and composition of new dining operations, as well as various alternatives for the development of conference/event center, which included a detailed development program with space types, sizing and adjacencies.

# projects



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA -- DAVIS

## Student Union Concept Development & Expansion

The Associated Students of the University of California – Davis retained The Pulse Group, to assist them in the development of a renovation and repositioning plan for “The Coffee House”, the major foodservice venue within the University’s Memorial Union. The Coffee House is an approximate 10,000 square foot facility, with 10 foodservice platforms and 600 interior/exterior seats that generates about \$3.0 million in gross revenue annually. As part of our work, we conducted a comprehensive assessment of existing facilities/operations and undertook an in-depth evaluation of the major demographic trends influencing UC Davis as a consumer market. We also conducted 20 focus groups and completed more than 500 intercept interviews with various university constituencies covering issues related to dining habits/patterns, customer service, imagery and preferred concepts. Based on our work we developed several alternative renovation plans for consideration and made a number of detailed recommendations with respect to organizational development issues, operations and service.

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS

## Planning for Visitors Center & Hotel

The University of Massachusetts retained The Pulse Group to better understand the potential for an Alumni Visitors Center with lodging, club, restaurant, event, tour and office components. Our market analysis included survey research with on campus demand generators, a review of off campus competition, an analysis of lodging, meeting and event demand, the development of a proto-type development concept and a proforma financial analysis for the project. Also as part of our work we reviewed previous analyses accomplished for the project, evaluated several potential sites and provided advice/guidance with respect to the proposed facility’s impact on existing facilities.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

## Conference Center Strategic Planning

The Pulse Group was retained by the University of Southern California, to assist them in the formulation of a redevelopment and repositioning study for the Davidson Center. The center built in the 1970’s and containing about 35,000 square feet of meeting and conference facilities had not been remodeled since its original construction. To create a viable plan for the center’s redevelopment The Pulse Group undertook a “best practices” review of the leading university business related conference centers nationally to better understand their facilities and service packages, plus examined current and future trends in the conference center industry overall. We also conducted a series of interviews and focus groups with internal and external current and potential customers to evaluate facility needs and seek input into potential facility changes. These efforts allowed us to make a number of facility recommendations and to develop a viable redevelopment strategy for the center.



the pulse group 25 years , 100's of food, retail and hospitality projects, one big success story...

# our clients





## PEOPLE

# our partners



**Thomas  
Tucker**

Partner | Food & Hospitality  
Strategy

[thomasdtucker.tt@gmail.com](mailto:thomasdtucker.tt@gmail.com)

(213) 804-0165

Mr. Tucker is an urban planner and Partner with The Pulse Group, with more than 30 years of experience in providing foodservice, retail and hospitality advisory services, to corporate, institutional and governmental clients. Mr. Tucker is recognized nationally as an expert in financial analysis, research, planning, development and operations for all types of hospitality, retail, foodservice and “guest/visitor serving” facilities including: university and corporate dining operations, public attractions, conference/event centers, private clubs, public markets, specialty retail marketplaces, athletic/recreational facilities, museums, cultural centers, hotels, resorts and golf courses



**Kim  
Royster**

Partner | Market Insights &  
Analytics

[kroyster@thepulsegroup.org](mailto:kroyster@thepulsegroup.org)

(213) 840-6257

Ms. Royster is the Partner in charge of market insights and analytics for The Pulse Group and has more than 25 years of experience in market, survey and focus group/community research and strategic planning for corporate, institutional and governmental clients. Kim's areas of specialization include overall research design and methods, data analysis/presentation, large and small group process facilitation and executive level reporting. Kim regularly completes studies and research efforts that involve measuring user/customer attitudes and awareness, testing user/customer preferences/satisfaction, measuring user/customer demand for new facilities/services, and uncovering “what’s missing.”