

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST  
AND VICE CHANCELLOR FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

INSTRUCTIONAL SPACE ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE

FINAL REPORT

2006-2007



ILLINOIS  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST  
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FINAL REPORT

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### **Committee Charge**

The Instructional Space Advisory Group was charged to establish a forum in which new instructional facility space needs, facility design, facility scheduling, departmentally managed space, campus managed space, information technology innovations, support staffing for facilities, technology replacement budgeting, and academic program changes and needs simultaneously can be considered. It also was asked to make recommendations about the long-term need for a permanent committee, either devoted entirely to this topic or incorporated into another extant committee.

### **Committee Membership**

Abbas Aminmansour  
Michael Andrejasich  
Tom Berfield  
Cheelan Bo-Linn  
Helen Coleman  
Deb Forgacs  
Paula Kaufman, Chair  
Sandy Goss Lucas  
Deanna Raineri  
Ken Spelke  
Joseph Squier

### **Summary**

Oblinger's opening sentence in her book, *Learning Spaces*, (2006) reads "learning is the central activity of colleges and universities" (p. 1). The extension from this quote is that it is the ethical responsibility of faculty and their respective institutions to provide an environment that maximizes learning by our students. However, to repeat an oft-referenced quote "teaching does not occur without learning," we would like to put forth the emphasis on "learning" rather than on "instruction." As such, in this report, we will use the term "learning space" and its reference to both formal and informal areas.

In addition, just as new buildings and remodeled existing buildings follow the program statement that provides the physical parameters, we propose a *pedagogically-based program statement* that can become a part of the dialogue in designing learning spaces. This pedagogically-based program statement, viewed simultaneously with the traditional program statement, can provide the description, support, and rationale for ways in which to maximize learning, critical thinking, and innovative thinking by our campus community.

### **Process**

The group met monthly throughout the academic year as a forum in which to discuss these issues. Subgroups met frequently to discuss specific topics and to prepare recommendations. We are pleased to submit this report and recommendations based on this work.

### **Findings and Recommendations**

The campus contains 405 general pool classrooms, ranging from 10 to 750 seats. Classrooms with fewer than 70 seats are allocated to departments for scheduling during six weeks of each scheduling

cycle. Those that are not scheduled during this period return to the general pool. Departments control about 400 additional classrooms and 100 seminar rooms, the latter of which range from a few to hundreds of seats. Wet and dry labs also 'belong' to departments. This system of multiple points of control results in inefficient use of classroom assets; it is not uncommon for classrooms designed to accommodate 40 students to be assigned to classes with higher enrollments.

Since the early 1990's, F&S has controlled funds for general classroom renovations; these were expended under Steve Hesselschwert's direction. Renovations, which include installing instructional technologies, began with the largest classrooms and now include classrooms with 60 seats. Although there were consultations with faculty who have used these classrooms about the types of technologies they required, there has not been a systematic approach to consulting faculty widely about their needs and anticipated needs.

Classrooms are scheduled and used for many purposes besides formal instruction. These additional uses number about 100,000 annually.

There are insufficient funds for classroom renovations. There also are insufficient recurring funds to maintain and replace installed technology in classrooms. As a result, some equipment is well past its intended or useful lives.

The group thinks it is important to understand that learning spaces extend well beyond formal classrooms and include informal spaces, library spaces, hallways, nooks and crannies, and other places in which people gather to discuss, collaborate, and learn. Learning occurs everywhere on campus. See Appendix A for a discussion of educational and philosophical considerations pertinent to learning spaces on campus.

New buildings and buildings that are undergoing renovation or repurposing present important opportunities for the campus to add new types of learning spaces. At present, the planning process, which tries heroically to be inclusive, may rely too heavily on building 'owners' to specify needs and thus represent lost opportunities to improve learning on campus.

### **Recommendations**

1. There is a need for a standing oversight committee to advise the Provost and other campus officials on issues relating to instructional space. Its charge should be to serve as an advocacy and advisory group to communicate information related to instructional space issues to the Provost and other campus officials and to assist the Provost's Office in prioritizing and supporting projects and in ensuring the optimal use of space and other instructional resources. Committee members should include student and faculty representatives of the Senate and representatives from the Center for Teaching Excellence, Chancellor's Design Advisory Committee, FMS, CITES, Teaching Advancement Board, F&S Planning, University Library, the CIO, and the Provost's Office. Together with the chair, the Provost should set priorities for the Committee's work annually.
2. The current mix of general pool, departmentally scheduled, and departmentally 'owned' classrooms and the designation of 'seminar rooms' applied as it is to rooms with a wide range of capacities results in a less than optimal allocation of classroom space on campus. The group recommends that with the exception of special-purpose spaces (e.g., wet labs), all classrooms should be 'owned' and controlled by the Provost and FMS, which should be delegated the authority to apply policies and make appropriate exceptions. Rooms should be assigned for appropriate class sizes; classes of 60 should not be assigned to classrooms built for 40. Seminar rooms controlled by departments should be allocated on the basis of a formula (to be determined by a successor committee).
3. The current class schedules, which do not utilize all days and times equally and which permit irregular start and end times, contribute to ineffective use of classroom assets and keep students from taking the courses they need to graduate on time. The group

- recommends that class schedules be regularized throughout the entire week (Mondays-Fridays).
4. Although investments in new and renovated classrooms have enabled the installation of new instructional technologies, sufficient funds are not available to maintain or replace this equipment as needed. We recommend that sufficient recurring funds (amount still to be determined) be allocated to Classroom Tech (CITES) to ensure that instructional technology remains functional and current. Specialized classrooms should be outfitted with special equipment. Furniture should be selected to meet the needs of adults.
  5. Security and energy use considerations lead the group to recommend that after-hours use of classrooms be restricted. A set of classrooms in one building should be designated for general after hours use.
  6. The campus should acknowledge changing student demographics and the ways in which learning occurs. The group believes that old assumptions that learning only happens in classrooms at fixed times by individuals must be shed in recognition that learning takes place everywhere in more conversational models, which invites and encourages co-learning and co-teaching. New pedagogical methodologies and the blending of learning styles call for flexibility in classroom design. New flexible designs must be used when renovating or building new classrooms.
  7. Although some students do not choose or cannot afford to bring laptops to campus, we must acknowledge that an increasing number of students have laptop computers. The campus should increase greatly plug and play capabilities, with access to sufficient electrical outlets and to projectors for group work; "dead spots" on campus where the wireless computing network doesn't reliably reach must be eliminated.
  8. Faculty and other instructors must have easy access to materials about teaching and learning. We recommend that the Center for Teaching Excellence, with support from CITES, create a wiki where these materials can be easily accessible and that fosters dialog about teaching and learning issues.
  9. RSOs do not have access to instructional technologies in the evening hours during which they are most active. A group of classrooms, outfitted with basic instructional technology, should be designated for their use.
  10. There are many dance clubs whose members rehearse daily throughout the year. The only venue currently available to them is the Armory, where their rehearsals often disrupt other learning activities. We recommend that there be discussions with DIA, KCPA, the Assembly Hall, and the Dance Department to allocate more appropriate space to these clubs.

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