

## EDITORS' NOTES

According to Banning and Canard (1986), "Among the many methods employed to foster student development, the use of the physical environment is perhaps the least understood and the most neglected." Faculty and students alike have become so accustomed to meeting in spaces that are sterile in appearance, unable to accommodate different instructional approaches, and uncomfortable for supporting adult bodies that most have taken these conditions as a fact of college life. The lack of extensive dialogue on the importance of learning spaces in higher education environments prompted the production of this volume.

The chapter authors look at the topic of learning spaces from a variety of perspectives, elaborating on the relationship between physical space and learning, arguing for an expanded notion of the concept of learning spaces and furnishings, talking about the context within which decision making for learning spaces takes place, and discussing promising approaches to the renovation of old learning spaces and the construction of new ones.

The volume begins with foundation in theory. In Chapter One, Nancy Van Note Chism offers an overview of the literature in the field, then focuses on the connections that have been made between modern learning theory and learning spaces. Ken Graetz and Michael Goliber use Chapter Two to provide background on what is known about how humans respond to space. Working within the modern context of collaborative learning and information technology, they detail implications for space design, primarily from the field of environmental psychology, the study of the relationship between people and their physical environment.

The next two chapters deal with expanding understanding of the definitions of learning spaces and furniture. In Chapter Three, Thomas Skill and Brian Young discuss the concept of learning spaces. They draw on popular principles of effective practice to talk about their implications for spaces that can serve the needs of students in face-to-face as well as virtual environments. Paul Cornell talks about the essential role of furniture in Chapter Four, portraying the ways in which furniture is at the heart of the flexibility needed to "decenter" classrooms, create learning environments in non-classroom spaces, move from one mode of interaction to another, enable collaboration, accommodate technology, and be suitable to learners of different ages and needing different physical accommodations.

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We wish to recognize the contribution of Melody Cook Coryell, administrative specialist at Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis, who checked references, standardized style, and deftly performed other necessary tasks involved in the production of this volume.

The planning process, another important dimension of the issue of learning spaces, is next treated. An in-depth look at the planning and implementation processes for creating learning environments is the topic of Chapter Five. Deborah Bickford focuses on the present process at most campuses, exploring how politics, finances, standards, and other features routinely interact, proposing a new vision for how planning can work more effectively and collaboratively. In Chapter Six, James Butz speaks from the perspectives of architect and educational facilities consultant on how educators can make best use of partnerships with architects.

The volume next turns to examples of good planning and implementation processes. A model planning process used at the University of Guelph is at the heart of a case study by Julia Christensen Hughes in Chapter Seven. Beginning with a planning approach that surveyed faculty and students on classroom design and learning technology preferences and also included the voices of others with a stake in learning spaces, the planning process identified the main factors that were important, such as capacity to accommodate different pedagogies, and key operational issues, such as a comprehensive classroom management system. In Chapter Eight, Joan DeGuire North details a case study of a campus that approached the renovation of existing spaces with new learning theory in mind. The chapter describes how simple strategies made the task of converting old spaces more economically feasible as well as how new issues and problems arise when learning spaces become more flexible.

Adding to the repertoire of cases, William Dittoe in Chapter Nine provides an overview of innovative models of new and renovated learning environments from campuses around the country. The descriptive text explains why these spaces are important to the educational process and how they relate to the concepts articulated in the preceding chapters.

Chapter Ten summarizes the main arguments. Coeditors Nancy Van Note Chism and Deborah Bickford provide a summary of the major ideas and implications discussed in this volume and pose a series of critical considerations regarding learning environments.

We have augmented this volume with a Web site (<http://spacesforlearning.udayton.edu>) to house all the Web references that authors have used in the text, so that the currency of the original references can be maintained. The Web site also contains diagrams, virtual tours, additional documents pertaining to learning space design, and links to other relevant sites. This site also has an interactional dimension so that the conversation will continue. The background readings here are intended to stimulate a conversation that has been too limited in the past—a conversation that should be more visionary and more inclusive as it explores and seeks to improve the physical environments that wield such influence over learning in higher education.

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**Reference**

Banning, J. H., and Canard, M. R. "The Physical Environment Supports Student Development." *Campus Ecologist*, 1986, 4(1). [<http://spacesforlearning.udayton.edu>].

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