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by Jeanne Kopacz

It's not uncommon for the academic community to offer new insights to the business population through statistical evidence, social observations, and other forms of research. In the world of facility management and design, however, we're seeing an increase in examples of smart space use that can also inform other project applications. As colleges and universities step up the competition for fewer traditional students, and the rising cost of education is scrutinized, institutions are having to do more compromising. For facility managers this creates, among other things, a shortage of available space for new and improving programs. In this article, we look at some examples of approaches used to help urban institutions capture found space within the campuses they occupy.

Competition for space forces us to question the norms we take for granted. While the need for flexible collaboration space is on the rise, many dedicated social spaces are getting smaller, or are being eliminated. On most campuses, private faculty offices have been replaced by hotel type workstations. Rather than invest in more classroom space, the movement to online classes has taken root. Designers and facility managers are regularly asked to simply do more with less. And the truth is, we can.

For older schools with over-scaled lobbies and central corridors prevalent in traditional architecture, re-purposing is a must. In some cases, wide circulation routes can be eliminated and recaptured into adjacent department suites as long as the proper egress requirements are met. See the example in the adjacent plan illustration. The before layout ([Figure 1](#)) shows the floor as it was previously configured, while the after ([Figure 2](#)) shows the changes that enabled school planners to capture found space in the corridor.

Alternatively, if corridors are needed, they can be repositioned and varied in their proportions to incorporate more usable space into the classrooms. In the example of the Computer and Materials Science wings at Wentworth Institute of Technology ([Figure 3](#)), Allegro Interior Architecture angled the corridors to improve lines of site into the classrooms while creating pockets of social space for students in the corridors. Space previously used for passage is now used for engagement.

In another situation, an institution had a shortage of small, one-on-one meeting spaces for the offices of admissions and career services. In order to meet the increasing demand without destroying the grandeur of the historic lobby, floating kiosks were added that house monitors, a small writing surface and some chairs ([Figure 4](#)). The kiosks sit on top of the very old terrazzo floor, while with air and

power are fed from the floor below so that the high, coffered ceiling above could remain fully exposed. The result is a few modern "roomettes" found within a large volume, historic space.

Sometimes space isn't found within the building but in the spaces between them. For a crowded university that desperately needed a 2,000 square foot bookstore café, this author was shown a free-standing transparent micro-building designed to float in a grassy courtyard. By keeping the outer envelope completely glazed, the designers hoped to maintain all lines of sight across the campus. Because of this found space, no departments would be asked to give up precious program space to house the café. As an added bonus, students could huddle under the eaves of the building during rainy weather.

In the current climate, managers and designers in all use groups are tested for their ability to be flexible. Congratulations to all the creative people working hard to find new solutions. May we continue to share what we learn across the use groups we support.



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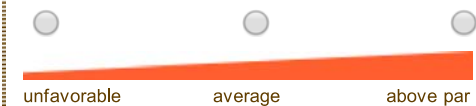
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