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The Sustainability Commitment

A PROGRESS REPORT
ON CLIMATE LEADERSHIP
ON CAMPUS

INSULATION & MOISTURE CONTROL
WEATHERPROOFING FOR
HISTORIC FACILITIES

COOPERATING FOR SAFETY
THE TEAM APPROACH TO MEETING
FIRE & BUILDING CODES

SPECIAL SECTION
CAMPUS FURNITURE,
FIXTURES & EQUIPMENT



WORK SPACES

The University Workplace

Faculty offices and administration interiors that work.

By *Marlyn Zucosky, IIDA*

The university campus is a city in microcosm. All the systems and structures needed to support a municipality are required to run a college campus. Decisions that shape the design of these support spaces, however, often fall to a small group of stakeholders: trustees and high-level administrators, usually in consultation with the campus architect or design-and-construction department. Keeping up is a challenge; as a result, the offices and workplace interiors often are old

and out of date.

To be more efficient and successful, campus workplaces should be updated and — where possible — even standardized from department to department.

It makes sense to standardize on fabrics, furnishings, and work-stations — mainly for visual consistency, ease of maintenance, and to keep costs down. Yet should the design of the admissions office look like the

campus police command center? Do faculty offices and campus support offices handle the same kinds of work, or respond to the same fluctuating departmental needs?

The answers, of course, are that they shouldn't and no, they don't. Leading institutions of higher education should ensure that every discrete department is designed to its own best practices for programming, design, and finishing, with its individual purposes in mind. The resulting facilities will last longer, require less maintenance, and are more efficient, bright, and uplifting for the occupants.

Examples of such exemplary workplaces include those at Princeton University in Princeton, NJ, where the school recently renovated a number of its office installations. To plan and create the revamped interiors, we borrowed strategies and furnishings from a variety of models, including trends in the corporate world, nonprofit headquarters, and other leading workplaces for their contributions to sustainable, successful work environments. Many techniques can be transplanted from the corporate sector to the academic world, with tweaks, for the benefit of the entire school.

Our overarching goal when approaching campus administrative spaces, however, is to avoid the tired paradigms of the past — for example, that faculty offices or a campus safety department must be given the smallest share of design consideration. Appearances matter, and significant campus research has shown conclusively that the physical condition of college facilities impacts faculty and staff morale, effectiveness, and retention. Designer Linda Pye of Charlot-

tesville, VA, has reviewed industry studies, concluding that “improved motivation and an overall enhanced learning environment result from improvements in building quality” and workplace designs.

Best Practices for Campus Offices

So how best to approach a project like Princeton, especially challenging because the school’s existing structures and longstanding traditions define so much before the design team has even arrived? Our approach is to lobby the client for some latitude to experiment with strategies and systems choices that, while perhaps not traditional, best serve the individual purpose of each space. The ultimate criterion is whether the recommended solution boosts return on investment (ROI).

Admissions and Administration.

University settings are typically permanent: there are no lease expirations, so materials are expected to last as long as possible. In this way, universities generally perform better than corporate America in maintenance of materials and finishes. And though much can be borrowed from the corporate models of workplace interiors, college administrative offices should be designed with a timeless concept in mind.

With no compelling need to respond aggressively to trends, purely administrative environments can utilize the best traditional workplace models, with hardwall offices and standard casework. Nevertheless, certain elements of trends in furnishings and sustainable design can be incorporated to make invaluable contributions to performance.

One key to success is daylight and outdoor views, which boost morale and productivity dramatically. Therefore, the layout should keep enclosed offices toward the middle of the buildings, opening perimeter walls to the whole team. Another simple approach is attention to color, which can help create vibrancy or softness in a space as desired. Seat cushions can provide a pop of color while allowing easy downstream change. In general, campus workplace furnishings are getting brighter and much more playful, just as in the corporate offices for Google and Facebook.

Administrative offices can also benefit from switching out traditional lighting schemes and furniture types for up-to-date alternatives. Task lighting and desk lamps can improve performance and simultaneously reduce energy costs, while ergonomically designed furniture can improve employee vision and health. But successful implementation requires stakeholders to remember that one size does not fit all: Clients should also engage in testing before making large purchases of furnishings and lighting systems.

President and Development Offices.

For most colleges, the premium placed upon prestige may be as large as that of a Fortune 500 company or a major legacy law firm. The university president’s office and the development offices will host meetings with potential donors. But because the office may be in place for decades, even centuries, high-quality and high-durability finish materials could represent a smart investment of design dollars.

Faculty Offices. A very different set of challenges comes with faculty offices in academic departments. More

than ever, the office plan must strike a balance between private spaces for permanent or tenured professors and shared space for adjunct personnel, not to mention departmental administrative staff.

As it happens, shared faculty offices are nothing new; hoteling and “hot-desking” in the corporate world may very well be a trend that the corporate world borrowed from academia. In fact, faculty offices, especially private ones, tend to be empty as much as 70 percent of the time.

Open office plans are becoming more common in departmental settings. At Joshua Zinder Architecture + Design, specifications tend toward open-plan workstations in many higher-education office projects, providing a shared-desking paradigm similar to hoteling. Some university leaders, however, will remain conservative in their approach to design and resist changes. For those groups who prefer the traditional office layouts, the design solution can incorporate a smart investment in flexible furniture and movable partitions; easy reconfiguration encourages impromptu meetings and collaboration, too.

The university should also consider glass partitions where applicable, since they can contribute to a natural illumination strategy while encouraging collaboration. For faculty offices, they also boost interaction with students, inviting them to stroll in.

Support Services. Successful colleges are also adapting existing and historic campus buildings for new uses as the workplaces of key support services.

A major part of the Princeton workplace renovations was the adaptive

M. Zucosky was Partner at Westcott Studios.



M. Zucosky was the Director of Interior Design for Clarke Caton Hintz.

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ALL THE COMFORTS OF HOME. In addition to creating attractive administrative campus spaces with attention to colors, textures, and a good amount of natural light, also invest in comfortable, ergonomic furniture. A cheap chair can cause back pain, contributing to complaints and absenteeism. An ergonomic chair provides lumbar support, has a seat that is height-adjustable, has enough width and depth to support any user comfortably, and has enough padding to be comfortable to sit on for extended periods of time. Also, a good desk will include systems to get rid of annoying "cable spaghetti" underfoot.

reuse of a former boiler house to accommodate both the Department of Public Safety and the Office of Physical Planning. A later building addition was removed and new floor levels were inserted within the original structure's shell. The interior spaces contrast the existing industrial character of the building

and the crisp, modernist aesthetic of the new offices.

The north façade is open, to take full advantage of available light. Open work areas were used wherever possible, utilizing landscape furniture systems. Glass walls or transoms are included in private offices along the

southerly façade, to capitalize on the daylighting filtering from across the floor.

The Public Safety office required a control room, interrogation and detention rooms, locker rooms, meeting areas, and holding cells. Between the rugged employment of the space

and the high frequency of interaction with students — not to mention the 24-hour occupancy and use — the space is finished with materials for maximum durability. The floors are primarily hard, resilient materials, such as stone, wood, and linoleum, while carpet is only used in private offices. Wall finishes and furnishings reflect this purpose as well.

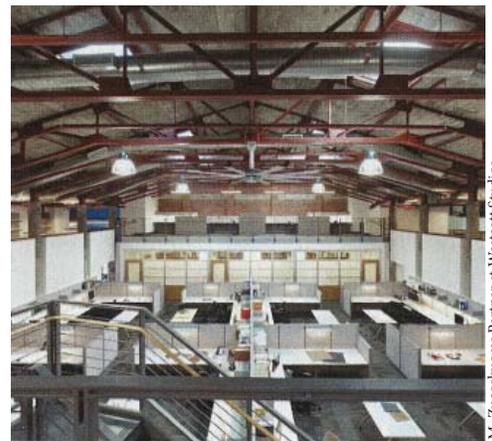
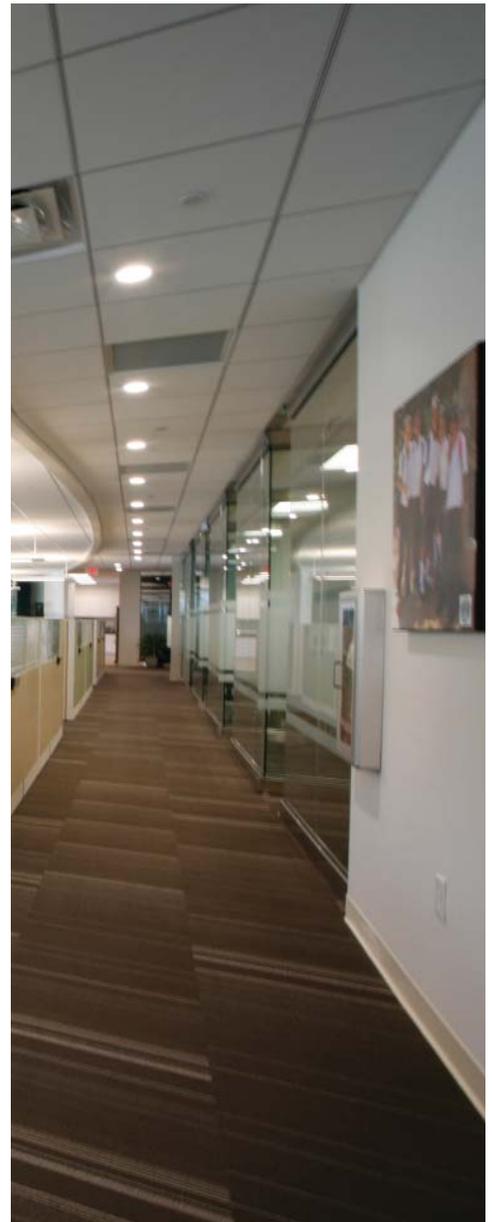
Specialized Departments. Certain campus offices may more liberally borrow from their counterparts in the commercial sector because of their more highly specialized nature. Princeton's Office of Physical Planning, for instance, had requirements unique to their building-oriented purpose; the office must accommodate plan storage, plotters, reference materials, and the like. Some traditions ruled the day, such as hierarchical office assignments with executives and professionals in private offices along the windows while project managers left to double up in remaining offices. But considerations for performance were essential for the renovation of the multiple-story boiler house.

Princeton's Office of Sustainability is an entirely different matter. Now in the design phase, this department has only four people on staff; yet even though it's a much smaller space, it has embraced green on multiple levels. This office has to lead by example: It promotes ways to reduce energy consumption as well as programs like a bicycle initiative, but the office itself will soon feature finish materials and interiors products that are rapidly renewable — cork floors, for example — and LED lamps, the long-life, low-power consumption light sources that save energy

costs as well as labor for relamping light fixtures. Because universities occupy their buildings for the long term, the ROI from durable flooring and LED lighting will redound to the university instead of to a future tenant. As proven through a life-cycle analysis (LCA), LEDs are an investment worth considering campus-wide.

No more so, however, than ample windows with good solar control to illuminate campus offices. In fact, Princeton's most noteworthy accomplishment may have been the increased use of natural daylighting in many of its interior projects. While such strategies require collaboration with the project architect, the introduction of glass elements in interior walls and partitions, light-colored coatings and finish materials that diffuse harsh light, and strategies for harvesting daylight and shipping it closer to the building core are all worth exploring. Exploiting daylight provides health benefits, boosts performance, and reduces energy costs; the ROI can almost always be calculated as short-term.

Marlyn Zucosky, IIDA, is director of Interior Design at the full-service architecture and design firm Joshua Zinder Architecture + Design (JZA+D), Princeton, NJ. Previously she was director of Interior Design for Clarke Caton Hintz. Zucosky adds 25 years of experience to JZA + D with expertise in office, education, hospitality, and commercial markets.



I CAN SEE THE LIGHT. To provide a productive working environment, lighting must be designed for long-term occupant comfort. Lighting the wall and ceiling reduces contrast, shadows, glare, and distractions. While the desktop and the worker's task area should be the brightest surface in the room, the walls, ceiling, and partitions should be about one-third as bright.