# new research in learning and working

evolving educational environments

Research shows that colleges and universities are vying with competing institutions to attract and retain the brightest students and the best faculty. Second, learning and teaching styles are changing with the proliferation of new ideas in education. Third, rapid changes in technology are requiring new ways to integrate technology within learning and working environments. What sort of environments will attract and retain students and faculty? Do your learning environments support new learning and teaching styles? Are your environments keeping pace with the constantly changing technology upgrades? Discover how you can increase the strategic value of your educational environment.
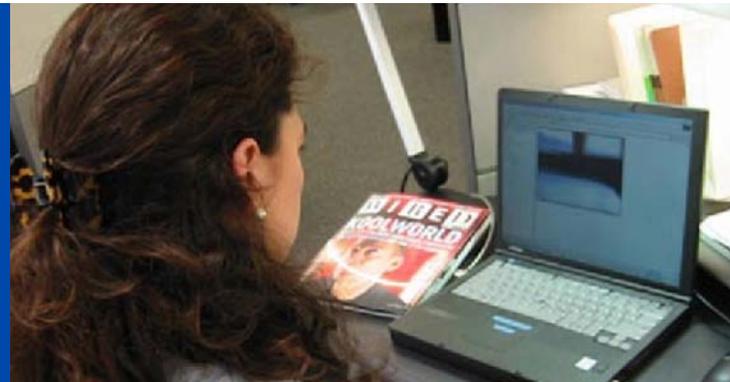
understand

To better understand the critical issues affecting higher educational needs, Steelcase launched an extensive, six-phase research and design initiative.

Phase one

Understand. The first stage of the process is to understand. Before going out into the field, our researchers prepare themselves by conducting secondary research and listening to what experts have to say. The foundation of knowledge prepares us to be smart listeners, conversant with the jargon, and aware of the trends in higher education and how things are evolving.

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observe

Phase two

Observe. In an effort to understand behaviors, our teams head into the field to see how students, faculty and administrators are using classrooms, lecture halls, student areas and faculty offices. The process focuses on observing students and faculty in the context of the college or university. Our goal is to gather unarticulated insights about how students and faculty learn and work. This helps us to understand how the design of classrooms, faculty offices, and spaces in-between can more effectively respond to the pressures they are faced with daily.

Phase three

When observations, secondary research and interviews are combined, they open our eyes to ways an environment can better support students and faculty, their interactions and the work they do.

Synthesize. After returning from observations researchers document what they've seen and heard, and share their most meaningful and interesting stories. When observations, secondary research and interviews are combined, they open our eyes to ways an environment can better support students and faculty, their interactions and the work they do. Synthesis is the stage at which we start to look for patterns and anomalies in this data. From the patterns, design principles emerge that guide design work and help us keep the user in mind.

synthesize

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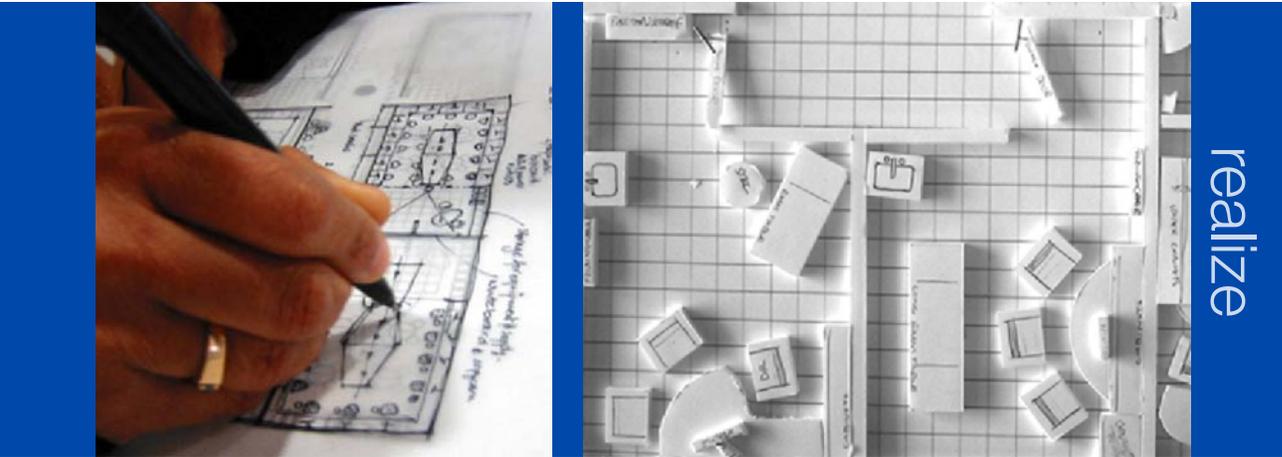
Phase four

Realize. We realize our design principles by developing sketches and conceptual plans. This is the primary vehicle through which we share our research. Our goal is to inspire new ways of thinking about space. These sketches can be thought of as a starting point for a conversation about needs and requirements. Although this process helps us create new concepts, we still depend on you to determine if the solution is right for you and your facility.

Phase Five

Prototype. After presenting our research findings, design concepts, and potential applications, we often partner with clients to further refine and pilot our concepts at a partner site or within a Steelcase facility. For example, the LearnLab™ is a prototype classroom built at our Steelcase University Learning Center. This fall, in partnership with a nearby university, a few classes are being taught in this classroom. Our researchers will be observing the behaviors in the LearnLab™ classroom to test our hypotheses about things like placement and amount of technology, transitions between single-focus and multi-focus modes of learning, and more.


prototype

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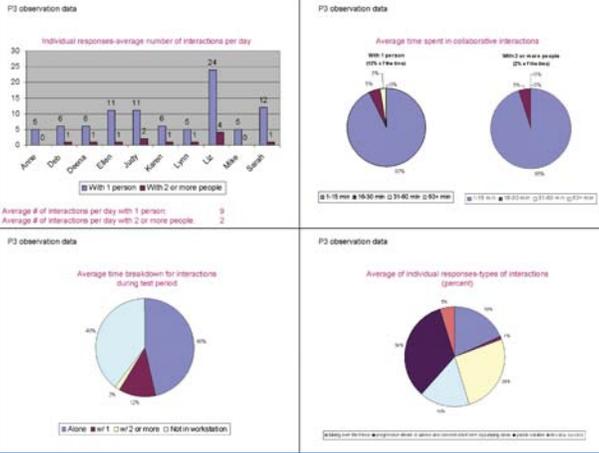
Phase Six

Measure. During and after the previous phase we collect data through a variety of techniques including time-lapse video, quantitative tools, and often more observation (photos and interviews). Our goal is to understand and report on the effectiveness of the concept, provide qualitative and quantitative feedback, and recommend iterations.

The Result of the Research

The result is a set of spaces that can help a school differentiate itself… as a place where the best and brightest faculty and students want to come and stay. These spaces suggest a number of different ways that classrooms, offices and the places between them can include and engage students, faculty and administrators in a full and enriching range of activities… before, during and after class.

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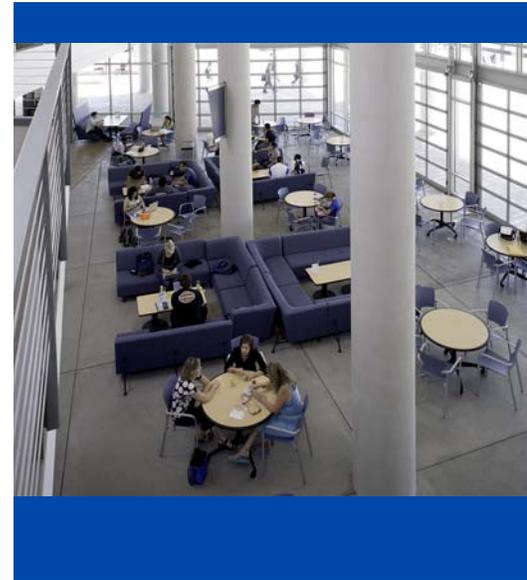
Allow classrooms to easily transition between single- and multi-focus modes and enable students and faculty to share information in new ways.

Support the range of activities that occur in a faculty office and a variety of work modes in a faculty neighborhood.