

NEW LEARNING SPACES ARE MODERNIZING THE TRADITIONAL CAMPUS WORLDWIDE

Globally there is a shift by higher education providers to transform the campus. With increasing competition to attract students both locally and internationally, education providers are investing in developing the best facilities. New types of classrooms are being built based on leading design and teaching principles, while incorporating the latest technology for more interactive learning.

We recently spoke to Hon Steve Maharey, Vice-Chancellor, Massey University and Barbara White, Senior Lecturer in Information Technology, Charles Darwin University about how they've been creating new learning spaces that will transform the education experience.

Discussing the opportunities that new learning spaces create, Barbara explained "The first thing is to provide more opportunity to experiment. I think for such a long time, the spaces in which we have to teach in higher education have been very fixed, and while there's been lots of rhetoric around changing to more learner centered practices, and perhaps using technologies more, spaces have often prohibited this."

Barbara discussed the new ACIKE building at Charles Darwin University. "A lot of things have been designed specifically to enhance flow, to remove notions of authority, and to blur the regions within the classroom, so that we actually have different ways of students walking in and perceiving what the classroom is going to be like in the first place."

Creating spaces that evolve with technology

Technology plays a central role when considering the design for a new learning space and this can bring new challenges and opportunities for education providers. Barbara believes that 'new generation' students are very technology savvy, "I can see in lots of places that teaching students how to use communication technologies as a knowledge practice, as opposed to an entertainment or communication practice, is where some of the issues still remain. I think learning spaces and new learning spaces are certainly providing an opportunity for those things to happen." Future proofing for new technology was an important consideration for the New Creative Arts Building at Massey University. Steve explained, "...that was a real lesson to us – we learned that we needed to invest heavily in future proofing our buildings because the demand for technology is going to rise exponentially. The new building is set to evolve along with the demand by students and staff for more digital capacity."

Achieving results through collaboration

Collaboration was also an important process for developing the New Creative Arts building. Steve elaborates on the project, “All the way through we have worked with responsive architects and builders. It has been an example of good practice. We are building a number of new buildings at the moment and this one has shown how valuable close collaboration between all of the partners can be. The builders and the users of the building have always been on the same wavelength.”

Steve emphasizes that creating a space that would inspire creative students was one of the goals for this building. “There is an overall set of goals here. We wanted a building that would permit a certain style of learning, that would inspire students, that would be all about creativity and innovation in and of itself. The staff knew exactly what they wanted to be able to do to enhance teaching and learning. Now the building is an expression of the University’s intention to provide a distinctive and exceptional learning experience for students.”

One of the key benefits of new learning spaces are they can change the way students and teachers interact, as Barbara discovered. “Don’t underestimate the agency that the materials in the space have. I think when we first started changing the space the most standout feature for us was how it changed our relationships with students. And that was completely unexpected, it was completely unforeseen in terms of making the spaces fit a technology that we wanted to use, but all of a sudden we interacted with students very differently. And they interacted with one another very differently. And I think that’s probably one of the most powerful lessons learned from our whole process.”

Taking place **8 – 9 May 2017** at the **Singapore**, the upcoming **4th Annual Next Generation Learning Spaces Asia** spotlight on today’s immediate and future needs for learning spaces and the resultant designs to maximize opportunities for student engagement.



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