



Report – Future Concordia: Campus Space Working Group

Dear Reader,

We are happy to submit this final report of the Future Concordia: Campus Space Working Group.

The work accomplished by the Working Group was made possible through the commitment of the members who brought ideas, research, opinions, and different points of view to every meeting in order to create an environment of honest discussion and collaboration.

We would not have been able to create this report without their hard work as well as the work of the many people who gave their time to meet with us, collaborate or share their research.

We are grateful to have the opportunity to present the fruits of this work on the next few pages.

Barbara & Angela

Mandate

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted a swift pivot to remote teaching, learning, and working and is accelerating institutional reflections about the role of physical campuses in post-secondary education. While physical proximity and face-to-face interaction traditionally defined much of the way Concordia operated, these past two years demonstrated that reaching our objectives and delivering the academic mission is rooted more in collaboration and productivity than it is in physical space. While campus space still forms an important part of our identity, of our service delivery, and of our sense of community, its role is evolving. The Campus Space Working Group is tasked with defining what this means for Concordia.

Membership

Co-Chair: Angela Tsafaras, Manager, Planning & Academic Facilities, FOFA

Co-Chair: Barbara Henchey, Director, Office of the Dean and Strategic Development, JMSB

Alex De Visscher	Chair, Chemical & Materials Engineering	GCS
Loredana Carbone	Manager, Research Events and Engagement	VPRGS
Andrew Woodall	Dean of Students	Student Services
Wael Badawy	Advisor, Occupational Health	EHS
Alex Konyari	Manager, Budget & Facilities	Library
Pascal Dufour	Facilities Planner - Architect	Facilities Management
Emilie Martel	Program Coordinator, Economics	FAS
George Balouzakis	Director Human Resources Administration	HR
Alice Jarry	Faculty member, Design	FOFA

Resources: Marie-Claude Lavoie / France Bigras / Lisa Ostiguy

Executive Summary and Recommendations

The Future Concordia: Campus Space Working Group determined a roadmap for the next few years to support the discussion of campus space at Concordia University. What follows are the recommendations that the Working Group believes will create a more dynamic, future-focussed way of using and experiencing space at the university.

The Working Group met virtually six times from October 2021 to March 2022. From the very first meeting there was an environment of healthy exchange and engagement from all the members. The preliminary discussions formed the basis of the design questions and the themes that were identified in these first discussions remained throughout the process.

At the beginning of the process, the members of the group shared their own experiences with space at Concordia, their thoughts on what worked, as well as identified gaps. After the first meeting, members were tasked with interviewing others and researching other institutions to find out what works, what doesn't, and what is in the space pipeline. The goal was to use various expertise, knowledge and experience developed during the pandemic to evaluate approaches and recommend a direction or vision for what the future could look like at Concordia.

Midway through our mandate, meetings 3 and 4, the Working Group decided on the top design questions to test (Appendix 1). The testing phase was conducted by sub-groups of the Working Group that consulted with the Concordia community and conducted focus groups, met with those that work directly with space daily and conducted interviews with diverse groups at the university. Also, external research by EAB (Education Advisory Board) was considered.

The recommendations are focused on the following topics:

- Accessibility
- Technology
- Collaboration
- Optimization
- Connection to other working groups
- Continuous Review

Recommendations

We were heartened to learn through the working group research as well as that of EAB that the considerations and concerns that we have about space are not unique to us or our institution. Many higher education institutions have been working on what space means to the future of higher education, and many have already started to work on pilot projects in anticipation of the next phase of space usage at their institutions. The recommendations for changes to space in the future needs to be based on what will users do in the space with the lens of continuous improvement as the use of space can change rapidly. Therefore, it is imperative to design for flexibility and build continuous improvement mechanisms based on data into any plans.

Accessibility

The accessibility of space, including a transparent centralized booking/space inventory that includes anatomy of space and data sheets, was identified as a gap. Silos have resulted from a perceived ownership of space within the institution, making it difficult for faculty, staff, and students to navigate and make more efficient use of available space. Differing policies and procedures sometimes exist regarding the booking of space, and a variety of local booking tools and websites exist. The working group recommends that a centralized and unified system be created that will identify bookable spaces at the university and that will enable user-friendly booking processes. These systems should allow regular review of space inventory lists and usage data with feedback mechanisms in place to ensure that the spaces conform to all the functionalities needed. The feedback mechanisms would be helpful to determine if adjustments should be made to the furniture/set up possibilities and would conform with the need for continuous improvement mechanisms. The Working Group does not recommend centralizing ownership of all spaces as it was noted that spaces are better cared for when assigned to a unit. It does however strongly recommend that regardless of the administration, the policies, procedures as well as the availability of all spaces should be information that is readily available to the end user.

Technology

The Working Group had many discussions on the use of technology, both in classrooms and in collaborative spaces. It would make a significant difference to ensure that there was simple but uniform technology in classrooms/conference rooms on both campuses. In order to efficiently use the technology in all its forms, we would also need to ensure that the WIFI is far reaching and strong. It should also be easy for guests to connect to WIFI at any time should they need it. Further expansion of virtual computer labs that students can remote connect. Forward thinking with metaverse as a next generation tool for recruitment.

EAB surveyed Senior Facilities Officers at academic institutions in December 2021 and it was found that 82% planned to incorporate or upgrade cameras, microphones and monitors in classrooms post-pandemic based on the learnings from that period. The second most popular choice for investment with the group was incorporating flexible design features in the classroom.

Collaboration

A recurring theme in discussions and the research of our Working Group was the demand for flexible collaborative spaces from staff, students, and faculty. These spaces should be dispersed throughout both campuses, would need to be well identified and should be assigned to a unit. Conference rooms should be available for booking by all groups as meeting spaces and collaborative spaces when not in use. Flexible furniture, base level technology (plug and play) must be available. It is imperative that acoustic treatment for proper sound proofing be considered, and it is important to avoid fixed furniture to encourage multi-modal use of space. Modular communal spaces will facilitate collaborative interactions and provide opportunities for community building. Focus groups comprised of mostly student participants reported that common spaces for them were democratic, non-judgment, accessible, belonging, comfortable, clean, flexible, beautiful and healthy spaces where you can meet different people from different units and who do different things. Furthermore, participants mentioned the importance of spaces that change over time, that adapt to the evolving needs of users and how they collaborate, study, rest and create.

Optimization

With data in hand, determining baseline levels and setting optimization goals must be the first step. Methods to achieve these goals include a review of class scheduling and start times. Faculty controlled classrooms means that optimization or visibility is not possible as systems are independent of each other. This must change keeping in mind that centralization can include priority access to departments and still work towards optimization goals.

Non-classroom spaces are not visible, and usage is generally unknown. In parallel, we must commence the development of space policies for classrooms, conference rooms, seminar rooms and offices etc. university wide. Centralized inventory must include room set ups and identify all possible uses to encourage sharing. Utilization rates should be under annual review. Are we building spaces to accommodate peak periods that can be alleviated with scheduling solutions? A separate but equally crucial point is the many uses of space. In some cases, there are areas that should be defined as group workspace, some areas should be areas of collaboration in a more creative sense, but areas for rest or reconnection need to be considered for all members of the community as well as the traditional quiet workspace. The concept of neighbourhoods has become increasingly relevant in post-pandemic workspace configurations as industry works to respond to the demand of differing work structures and needs. A neighbourhood within a space floor plan represents a specific type of work that would be conducted in that “neighbourhood” such as an area for socializing, an area for meetings, an area for individual quiet work.

Optimization – Continuous review and incentives

The best way to move forward towards a continuous review of space would be to understand our present use of space. A space audit is not only needed but necessary moving forward. This audit would identify to which percentage space is being used at the institution and must include not only classrooms but open spaces and office spaces. When considering office space, it is important to consider pilot projects that are underway at Concordia and have been conducted at other institutions. EAB research provided us with the details on two interesting recent projects.

At Leicester University in the UK, they embarked on a three-phase pilot project to optimize the use of office space. The first step was to survey managers about the use of office space and estimate the amount of time that office space was used. This survey phase was followed by an analysis phase to gauge the types of spaces needed at the university with a third phase of redesigning spaces. The university launched WorkSmart in July 2021 and are therefore in the final stages of this project.

At Parsons in New York, the institution motivated faculty members to give up their individual offices by offering incentives. Faculty members were awarded one of two possible bonus payment plans in return. The shared office option allowed faculty members to retain a permanent desk and share space with three or more people. They were awarded a one-time bonus payment of \$500 and a monthly stipend of \$230. The hot desk option gave faculty members access to unassigned desks and communal offices that they could book, as well as conference rooms as needed for private meetings. The members that chose this option were awarded a \$500 signing bonus and a monthly stipend of \$370. The strategy was successful and 73% of all faculty members ended up participating in one of the two plans which assisted Parsons in dealing with the difficult space constraints of operating in a downtown core.

Connection to other working groups

After every meeting of the individual working groups, there was a co-leads touchpoint to discuss the work progression. It became clear early on that campus space would overlap all other groups due to its overarching role in the community.

At the final presentations for the first set of working groups on April 20, all the groups addressed the importance of space in their working group discussions as well as their plans.

The University Outreach group spoke to bio-directional communication and accessibility as well as proactively shaping the future and owning the living/working environment.

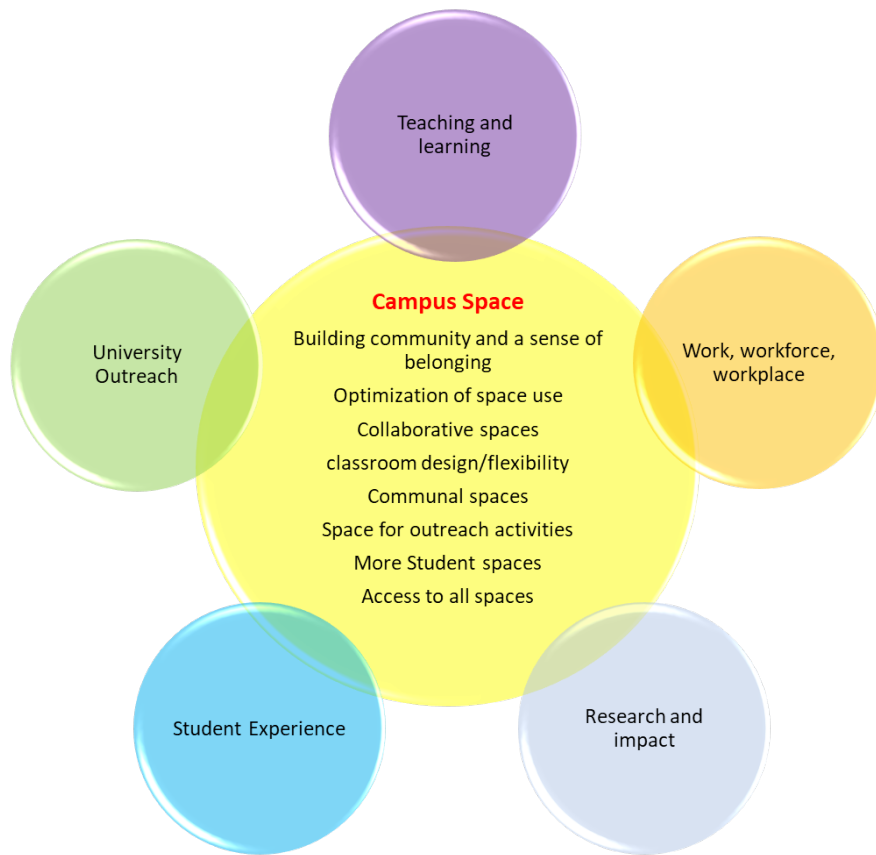
The Student Experience group spoke to the importance of socializing and networking as well as bookable spaces.

The Work, Workforce and Workplace group spoke to the need for adaptable design, accessible booking spaces for various needs and the alignment of space and technology for its use.

The Research and Impact Working Group emphasized the importance of time and to a lesser degree physical space and the Teaching and Learning Working Group underlined the need for communal and collaborative spaces as well as flexibility in classroom design. The future of teaching is leaning heavily on active learning and the physical spaces must be designed to support this direction. A direct link to the restrictive nature of fixed seating for example.

All working groups have included in their recommendations the need for collaborative spaces and supportive systems for the use of space as well as the need for continuous improvement mechanisms.

Following all the presentations, it became abundantly clear that there was one thing that connected every working group, and it was the concept of community and the desire to ensure a strong sense of community and a sense of belonging. Students are seeking to connect with others when they join the university, faculty and staff seek out the connections to the community that they lost during the pandemic and are rejuvenated by the reconnections that have happened as restrictions have eased. Alumni are happy to engage in the classroom and at events with students and the community. It is important that we recognize and reinforce collaboration and community at every step of the way for all working groups and more specifically, in this case, when we plan and project campus space. It was clear from our research that spaces should be designed based on our organizational objectives—our mission. Designing spaces that will strengthen and deepen a sense of community and belonging for all members of our community is possible and must be part of the future of space at Concordia.



Continuous Review

The working group strongly recommends that the discussion continues past this mandate in the form of annual reviews and regularly scheduled surveys, conversations with the community and data collection.

Discussions included the idea of having an annual round table or community event at 4th SPACE to ensure that the community engages in a culture of consultation through the lens of continuous review and reflection on the use of space and identification of space and, its place in our community.

We therefore recommend that a Campus Space Steering Committee be created with representation from faculty, staff, and students with a robust plan for data collection and continuous review in their mandate. This Steering Committee would work to support and assist the various departments and complement the work already underway at the university.

Conclusion

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee for inviting us to participate in the Future Concordia initiative. As co-leads and on behalf of the entire working group on campus space we hope that our recommendations are useful and assist in shaping the future at Concordia.

Appendix 1: Design Questions

Question 1:

What are the barriers to optimal space usage and how do we remove them?

Ownership and management of spaces	Design and Functionality of Design	Budget and Planning Transparency	Technology
Not enough transparency concerning the management of space	Some spaces not adapted to more than a single usage	Complexity in managing academic schedule	No systematic search has been done to make sure the space is optimally used
Too many actors to manage spaces	Not knowing what is possible to retrofit or change space (recent article about Concordia acquiring the Fulford residence on Guy...what does that mean and what are the plans?) *	Incentives, either financial or 'privileges'	Apps to see spaces available
We need to change the notion that a space "belongs" to any one entity. Community think rather than mine versus yours.	A lack of imagination regarding cross-functionality (hockey arenas are used 24/7 almost) **	Activity that will be performed versus what users think is the need. How do we capture this? **	Network issues in some areas might not make those spaces as interesting
	Unclear objectives when developing new buildings and spaces **	Competition between research, teaching and learning and student life with obvious winners and losers. **	

** same number of votes **

Question 2:

How might we make better use of current spaces to provide more communal areas for staff, students and faculty members by reallocating, sharing, transforming spaces for more flexibility

Research & Consultation	Space Design	Process
Conduct field research to observe how people are using current space,	Ensure that there are electrical outlets everywhere	Simplify the process to have access to space

including how ambient noise, temperature, etc. can affect the use of the space	and that the WIFI is strong and reliable	
Consulting with all of Concordia (services, faculty, community) – find needs – Huge consultation	More shared common areas (I.e.: student lounge next to faculties')	Establish a 24-hour schedule wherever possible
Make sure students are involved in the process to find solutions	Movable spaces	Adjust quickly to changes

Question 3:

How do we incentivize better use/shared use of spaces (labs, classrooms, offices, meeting rooms, etc.)? How can we connect our both campuses spaces?

Data Collection & Sharing	Financial aspects of space and benefits	Connection of spaces, campuses, and services	Technology and Furnishings
Provide people with data on how they use their space	Provide incentives for faculty moving to blended course model – as of now, it requires more organization and gives less flexibility (i.e., having to give up classroom space on dates not used) to profs	Create dedicated video technology between campuses	Provide an easy-to-use booking system that is transparent to all with fast-track booking options.
Conduct field research to observe how space is used currently (by whom? When? For what purposes?) -- pay students to do this	Include the concept of space rent in department budget (more spaces you own, more rent you theoretically pay)	More frequent shuttle buses (carpooling system between both campuses for staff, faculties & students?)	Spaces which can adjust quickly to different needs
Review space usage regularly **	Pay people willing to give up an office and switched to a shared office model.	Make AV EASY TO USE (docking stations, etc.)	Make AV EASY TO USE (docking stations, etc.)
Community involvement to make sure everyone is on board and avoid space conflict. **			

Appendix 2: Connection to other working groups

	Space	Work	Students	Outreach	Teaching and learning	Research
identifying student needs			X		X	
hybrid working				X		
space for centralized outreach resources				X		
collaborative spaces	X	X			X	
supportive		X			X	
building community and sense of belonging	X	X	X	X	X	X
inviting in and public impact				X		
optimal use of spaces	X					
all classrooms/labs/studios with moveable seating (class design that supports student well-being)	X		X		X	
sharing	X				X	
post pandemic opportunity	X					
all classrooms equipped for remote delivery and support (IT)			X		X	
collaborative areas (ownership vs usage)	X				X	
rest and recuperating areas	X				X	
importance of data	X					

data needed so we know who our students are		X		
technology	X		X	X
ongoing annual forums/discussions	X			
flexibility			X	X
agility/hybridity			X	
centralized booking systems - transparency	X			
fiscal responsibility with new spaces	X			
reallocation of current spaces	X			
access to spaces all around university	X		X	
creating more spaces for students		X	X	
funding for struggling students		X		
multi-use spaces (social and academic exchanges)	X		X	
ensuring safety (both in and outside of classroom/labs/studios)		X	X	
rethink campus space for testbed outreach activities			X	

Appendix 3: Key Common Themes and Comments

Some key comments:

Resource guarding

Poor navigation in buildings – students have trouble finding where to go .. lounges and communal areas....

Hot seats and hotelling for grad students

Poor WIFI in grad student spaces

Natural light for communal areas and lounges

Keep the virtual alive for work and study

Promote sharing of spaces without losing them

Test changes – run pilot projects – ask people to experience before finalizing change

Set our own examples

Spaces that are centralized should be owned by highest authority.

Funding is scarce so spending must be done on what is utilized most

Look at ratios of offices vs common and student areas

Method of consultation is key. People want their voices and opinions heard.