

Vision of the Learning Environment at Grand Rapids Community College

Prepared by the
Learning Environment Team

This vision is the result of the work of the Learning Environment Team at GRCC. It represents the team's vision of the ideal GRCC campus as an enhanced learning environment. The vision was formulated after a great deal of consideration of the many factors that influence the campus community.

The Grand Rapids Community College campus is a warm, vibrant and safe learning environment. The entire campus invites learning, engagement, professional conversation, reflection and social interaction.

To achieve this vision, the Learning Environment Team has established the following universal guidelines for an enhanced physical learning environment at GRCC.

The enhanced physical learning environment at GRCC must:

- Meet the basic needs of human beings, including a diversity of physical needs
- Allow for multiple modes of learning in support of different learning styles and different teaching styles
- Allow and support individual choices and needs
- Provide places outside classrooms and offices that are conducive to formal and informal interaction
- Provide for flexibility in use of space
- Symbolize that learning is honored and that students and staff are valued
- Embody a democratic spirit by providing quality space for everyone
- Support access to and interaction with the greater community
- Be designed to meet functional needs; understanding that learning is distributed, has discipline-specific requirements, depends on technology, and requires multiple types of spaces
- Provide physically and psychologically safe spaces in support of learning



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Vision and Guidelines in Action

Information/Communication:

- The names of all campus buildings convey a collegiate image.
- Maps, signage and electronic media assist students and visitors in locating buildings, offices and rooms on campus.
- Information about college services and resources is readily available to students, staff and visitors.
- Information about current college activities is readily available to students, staff and visitors wherever they are on campus.
- The prevailing consumer technologies are used to communicate important information to the individual student, employee or community member.
- Staff members are well-informed about college offices and services and respond accurately with warmth and courtesy to questions about the college.

Environment:

- Bostwick Commons invites students and staff to gather outside for casual conversation.
- Comfortable, informal learning spaces located on each floor of every campus building encourage studying and informal dialogue. Food and beverage can be consumed in those informal learning spaces.
- Informal learning spaces adjacent to classrooms allow small-group pedagogies in classrooms to expand into the adjacent space.
- All internal building environments are quality, high-energy work and study environments. Walls are painted in vibrant, engaging colors. Artwork in hallways is visually appealing and stimulates thought and self reflection. All internal building environments encourage students to focus on their personal and academic goals and to respect needs and rights of others. Walls of the classrooms have ample whiteboard space and display colorful posters, artwork and instructional materials.
- Classrooms are equipped with tables and comfortable chairs that are appropriate for our population. This furniture can easily be moved to accommodate the preferred pedagogy for each class.
- Classrooms have sufficient space available to invite the movement of furniture, students and faculty throughout the room during the class.
- College policies empower faculty to create the classroom configuration that best supports the learning outcomes for that particular class.
- Technology that supports instruction is readily accessible. All classrooms have the technology infrastructure needed to accommodate future technology developments.

- Lighting in classrooms is sufficiently bright to promote reading and lively interaction. Level of lighting can be conveniently controlled to support various instructional methods.
- The college's heating/ventilation/air-conditioning (HVAC) system is regulated to levels that are safe, healthy, comfortable, and conducive to learning.
- All facilities are well-maintained (furniture, floor, carpeting, walls, bathroom fixtures, etc.)
- All areas of campus are physically and psychologically safe.
- Faculty office areas offer space for confidential conversations with students, one-on-one learning during office hours, and other individually-focused tutoring.
- A variety of quality food services are available and distributed throughout the campus. Picnic tables and benches are available throughout the campus
- The campus is a tobacco-free environment.
- Restrooms are designed for comfort and cleanliness. All equipment and materials are designed to minimize environmental impact. All restrooms have shelves to accommodate backpacks, books, etc.

Individual Needs:

- All campus spaces strive to meet the basic needs of all individuals for a healthy, comfortable, and functional environment.
- The learning environments on campus are readily accessible to all learners and support a variety of learning styles and preferences.
- Students, staff and faculty are encouraged to develop and express their opinions. Opinions of a broad spectrum of individuals are respected.
- Students can identify and access places on campus where they feel comfortable and safe when necessary.
- Faculty are integrally involved in the setting of standards for all learning environments and in the design of those environments. The design of specialized instructional areas (e.g. science laboratories, art studios, etc.) relies heavily on the faculty who will teach in those environments.
- Faculty and staff have areas available for informal interaction over lunch and breaks. Interaction is facilitated with members of their own department and with faculty and staff from other offices and departments.



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