By Gayle Bennett

DESIGNS ON THE FUTURE

In the next 10 years, how should the physical campus change?

For many institutions, the early 2000s saw campus design and architecture informed by an arms race to attract the millennial student. Climbing walls, plush dorms and sleek rec facilities predominated—and did a good job of attracting those students.

But in this post-recession era, with state governments generally not backfilling the funding they ciphered away and parents questioning rising tuition levels, campus planning for the next 10 years at many institutions is shifting to other strategic goals—namely, those centered on instructing students.

"Institutions are now recognizing that the instructional spaces have languished," says Persis Rickes, president of Rickes Associates, Inc., a higher education planning firm in Boston. "Now there's a rising recognition that campuses need to focus some effort and dollars on their core business, which is teaching students."

In addition, institutions are focusing on being more outward-facing members of the communities in which they reside. By constructing institutional buildings in commercial areas off campus or using campus buildings to engage local businesses or community members, college and university leaders are helping students, community members and local businesses succeed in many different ways.

A Better Take on Planning

Many institutions have a hodge-podge of buildings on their campuses that were designed for individual departments or administrative purposes without a larger view of the campus plan in mind.

"What I see as an architect is that oftentimes institutions haven't developed a long-range campus plan and/or they don't invest in architectural design," says Jessica Rothschild, senior associate at EHDD Architecture in San Francisco about her work with universities. "We're often talking to facilities

people or people in charge of a particular department, say the biology department. He's a great guy, but should he be the client representative with an architect? With the university president, I would say, let's set the big picture vision for the built environment. What are the goals?"

University of Texas at Brownsville (UTB) is an example of an institution looking at the big picture. The campus has moved to a different location in Brownsville, and John Syversten, senior principal of architecture at Chicago-based Cannon Design, is working with UTB President Juliet Garcia on the physical master plan for the campus. And this work isn't

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being done in an architectural vacuum: The academic plan for the university—which serves a low-income, primarily Hispanic population in the Rio Grande Valley—and the physical plan have always been in sync. "There has never been a moment along the way where those two sets of discussions didn't influence each other," Syversten says.

Since the academic plan at UTB, and at an increasing number of universities, is very interdisciplinary, this is the architectural focus as well. "From a plan standpoint, what drives us forward is a very integrated approach to the distribution of buildings by type without saying this is the science area, here is the arts area, whatever the typical silos are," Syversten says.

At California State University, Channel Islands, President Richard Rush is hoping to build out his 12-year-old campus in the next decade, especially since he has recently been given permission by the state to increase the student population. The campus was built on the grounds of a former state mental hospital; its existing buildings are 1930s California Mission and Spanish revival architecture, but they have a downside: foot-thick walls, floors and ceilings. "They are concrete bunkers," says Rush. "They're beautiful architecture, but adapting them is a real challenge for architects because the charge from the board of trustees is to maintain the architectural style."

He'd like to build a number of academic buildings immediately, a lab first and foremost, but there's the reality of finding the funding. Public-private partnerships and donor-funded buildings are the future of his build-out. And this means his priorities might get reshuffled. "In a sense, it's catch as catch can because donors don't always have the same thing in mind

that we might," Rush says. "If they want to build a student housing complex, that might rise to the surface. We need it; it just might not have been No. 1 on the wish list."

More than money, Earl Potter, III, president of St. Cloud State University in Minnesota, says he needs time. "What we have to do is rethink our whole delivery strategy—how are classes going to be taught?" He lists online education and credit for prior learning as reasons he doesn't need a bigger campus, and as more students want to live off campus, he's going to eliminate some campus housing. "[We need] modest monies, but rethinking the university is really what we need to do. The rethinking of the university will drive our approach to facilities in the next couple decades."

However, he's not saying there's no need for a physical campus anymore. "When students learn in a community, their learning experience is different than when they learn from sitting in front of a screen. When people engage each other, they develop skills that are not developed in an online environment."

Syversten agrees. When he started work on the UTB campus two years ago, "the world was swinging erratically toward MOOCs and everyone thought this was the be-all and end-all of education. The pendulum is starting to swing a little back toward the middle, a blended approach, which is clearly the direction this team will be heading."

Rethinking Instructional Spaces

The design buzzwords today for labs and classrooms are interdisciplinary, collaborative, flexible and adaptable. And, of course, every instructional space must be able to support any number of technologies from any number of people in the room.

Syversten, who has worked with a number of educational institutions in his career, says the general approach today is to gather together instructional spaces that have specific technology and mechanical requirements, regardless of discipline, and then surround those spaces with flexibly designed working areas where students and faculty from the different disciplines can collaborate. "We are seeing that these use-intensive spaces will be part of the future, but we don't need

Learning Spaces Today and Tomorrow

For more information on the evolution of instructional space, see the following publications.

Planning for Assessing 21st Century Spaces for 21st Century Learners
Released by Learning Spaces Collaboratory (LSC) in November 2013, this publication aims to help campus leaders imagine and shape new spaces and repurpose existing ones. LSC is composed of academics, architects, leaders of national societies and academic leaders. Available at *www.pkallsc.org*.

Thought Leaders Report 2013: The Rising Cost of Higher Education
This APPA—Leadership in Educational Facilities report focuses on aligning the programs and priorities of institutions with their mission and vision, identifying programs and facilities that need investment, and understanding the challenges posed by increasingly complex buildings, among other topics. Available at *www.appa.org*.

Report on Trends in Higher Education Planning 2013
This document, from the Society for College and University Planning (SCUP) Academy Council, is a flash report of continuing and emerging issues in higher education planning. It's a reflection of what is resonating in the minds of the academy members who participated in SCUP's 2013 annual conference. Available at *www.scup.org*.

them everywhere. If you can concentrate them and then allow for flexibility adjacent to them, it's a way to encourage cross-disciplinary work and allow departments to ebb and flow over time," Syversten says.

That ebbing and flowing is key. The delivery of education is changing, so it's best not to lock into something that can't be changed down the line. Rush is focused on designing adaptable spaces that his successor can modify without tearing down the building. "In other words, having a giant shell that in the interior is a flexible but dynamic space," he says.

The new $49 million science building at St. Cloud State offers a good example of what many institutions are striving for. Finished in August 2013, it takes into account the current design zeitgeist—interdisciplinary, collaborative and adaptable spaces—as well as the desire to provide students with more practical, real-world experiences. St. Cloud has a number of nearby manufacturing businesses, and Potter wanted this new building to be a place they could use for product development or basic research. He reports that this vision is coming to pass: "Our faculty and students engage with real businesses—science- and engineering-based businesses—in the community."

Higher education planner Rickes points out that making changes to classrooms and labs can be smaller in scale and budget. "It can be as simple as having furniture with wheels on it that you can rearrange into groups," she says. "You may need to sit in chairs for

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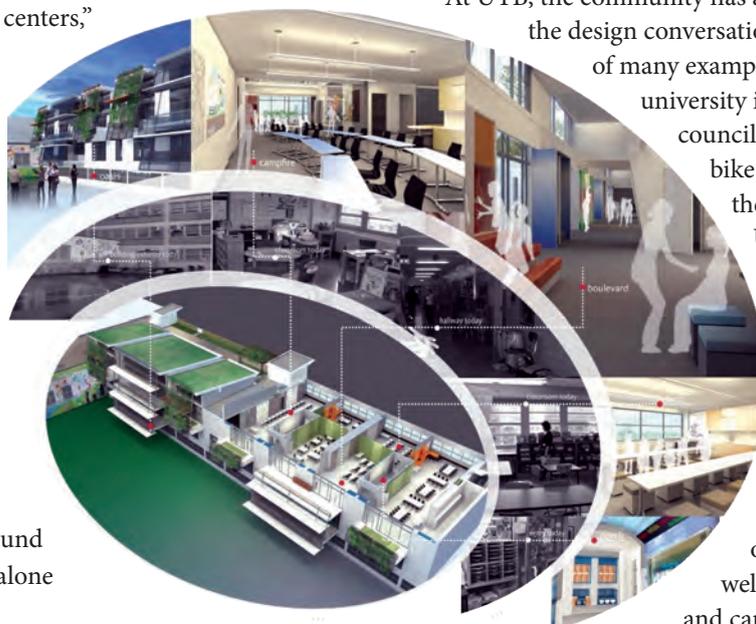
—Jessica Rothschild

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a portion of the lecture discussion, but then you want to break into groups. You want furniture that facilitates that, and then you need the space to move around."

Another important academic space is the library, which has seen some major changes in the last decade as digital resources emerged. At St. Cloud State, the newest library building—constructed about 10 years ago—sits next to the building that houses the university's IT operations. This is by design: "Our CIO and our university librarian are in partnership to continue to create the capacity in the library building that's right for the time," Potter says.

Over the last 15 years, Rickes has seen libraries expand as they incorporated breakout spaces for student collaboration, which has been deemed key to learning. Also, "libraries became quasi student centers," she says, complete with coffee shops.

But she wonders if there will be a swing back to the individual library carrels of old, as students need time alone to listen to online lectures, a staple of the emerging flipped-classroom concept. According to the Society for College and University Planning's *Report on Trends in Higher Education Planning 2013,* a 2012 survey found that students want more study-alone spaces on their campuses.

Letting the Community In

When Potter came to St. Cloud State as president in 2007, he found a campus "turned in on itself." In an effort to change that, the university built a combination dorm and welcome center, with first-floor commercial space, six blocks north of campus on the edge of downtown St. Cloud. "It amazes me that that six blocks difference makes so much impact in the community," he says. "The community now sees us as a presence in the community."

St. Cloud State's university housing and welcome center building is owned by the J.A. Wedum Foundation, a nonprofit that returns half of the excess revenues from the development to the university for scholarships—$140,000 to $150,000 annually, Potter says.

Rickes mentions The Ohio State University's redevelopment of High Street as another example of a university turning itself inside out. "It was a series of rundown, undesirable retail spaces for the most part," she says of the commercial strip close to campus. "Now it's a very vibrant, bustling place. It's a destination not just for the students to cross the street, but also for the area."

Using university construction dollars off campus is not just an excellent good neighbor strategy. Many institutional leaders are eager to offer students more hands-on experience in their fields of study, and helping them do that in the community makes perfect sense. "Our commitment to engagement [of the community] has a lot to do with the kind of learning environment we are creating for our students," Potter says.

At UTB, the community has always not only been a part of the design conversation, but involved in it. As one of many examples of this involvement, the university is working with a Brownsville councilmember to ensure that the bike paths being developed in the city also run through the UTB campus. "In our master plan, we have completely integrated our circulation system with the city's bike path and transportation system," Syversten says. Cameron County, which includes Brownsville, has one of the highest rates of diabetes in the state, and wellness is a big push for the city and campus.

Like St. Cloud State, Syversten says that UTB eventually plans to use some buildings in the old part of downtown Brownsville, further blurring the lines between physical campus and community.

Future-proofing is a term that comes up a lot in campus design. If the Internet age has taught us anything, it's that things can change very quickly. Therefore, the stakeholders needed in the campus design conversation have grown in number and evolved in job title. "Even 10 years ago, people would pull out a fairly traditional planning process. There'd be a significant number of people who must be engaged today who wouldn't have been at the table 10 years ago," says Potter.

This stakeholder growth is good, but it's not without its challenges. Says Potter, "The complexity of the conversation is dramatically different. I think it's an exciting time, but it's not easy. **P**

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