

a customer story

higher education

A new computing standard.



Klaus Advanced Computing Building

Georgia Institute of Technology

Atlanta, Georgia



Credits:

Perkins + Will

The new Klaus Advanced Computing Building is like a computer chip: high tech, multi-layered, and the hub of frenetic activity. It's host to laboratory research, classroom teaching, and faculty collaboration in a wide array of workspaces, all focused on the science of computing. Plus, just weeks after its opening, the Klaus building has become the hot new location for staging all manner of Georgia Tech campus events.

Yet the Klaus building is primarily a research facility, so it's appropriate that the building planners and its future users benefited from Steelcase's research on higher education and laboratory science environments. "We were very impressed with the amount of research Steelcase has done, not just on higher ed spaces, but the wealth of experience they have on longer running studies, user-centered design

principles, and their deep understanding of the workplace," says Ellen Zegura, chair of the School of Computer Science and Co-leader of the six-year project.

A Workspace Futures team from Steelcase observed the university's then current laboratories, faculty and grad student offices, student lounges, and studied the various interactions taking place in those spaces. In the faculty offices, for example, researchers observed how instructors use their workspaces like mini command centers where:

- communities of practice develop
- projects are managed and tracked
- materials are displayed and discussed
- colleagues meet, talk, collaborate, and innovate
- teachers advise and instruct students
- a variety of media are stored
- instructors also read, relax, and conduct other business

Researchers detailed the needs of different users and the activities faculty offices could effectively accommodate in the new building. They compared their field work against Steelcase's knowledge and experience with similar organizations to offer options and ideas for how faculty offices could be configured.

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How well the building supported faculty was critical to the building's success. Faculty were being brought together into the new



Left: Four balconies overlooking the atrium with comfortable, collaborative furniture are popular places to gather.



Right: Groups gather outside laboratories to study, work and collaborate.

building from three different buildings scattered across campus and from both the College of Computing and the School of Electrical and Computer Engineering.

“A major objective was to set a benchmark for collaboration across disciplines,” notes Gary McNay, architect at Perkins + Will, Atlanta. To support faculty interaction and collaboration, the Klaus building beautifully blends a variety of workspaces. Three of the major workspaces - laboratories, faculty offices, and groupwork areas - exemplify an environment that’s designed and built for comfortable, productive collaboration.

Laboratories – there are 70 of them in the 414,000 sq. ft. facility – are shared by the colleges and faculty members. It’s not unusual to see two or three teams working in one lab.

Glass walls and doors encourage people to stroll in, while Werndl® Freewall™ with movable Universal worksurfaces and Turnstone® mobile pedestals let users easily reconfigure their workspace to fit the needs of the moment. Faculty and students have taken this flexibility to heart.

“We picked furniture for the labs that was particularly easy to reconfigure, with the expectation that students in different groups would use it differently. Today, I don’t think any two labs are the same.

Everyone’s creating different things, different work groups, different levels of privacy and openness. I’m thrilled to see the variety,” says Zegura.

McNay says even he’s surprised by the diversity of user-inspired layouts. “The labs are being arranged in ways we never expected. We based them on two or three different layouts, but there are maybe 20 to 30 different strategies based on how they’re using the furniture. They’re making donut shapes, triangles, turning things 90 degrees, and that was the intent going in. They have a sense of ownership. They’re deciding ‘I want my team to work this way,’ and the space lets them work how they want.”

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Faculty offices average 180 sq. ft. and include furnishings designed to support varied activities.

Metro Topo™ freestanding systems furniture has a flex-to-fit adjustment range of 18” laterally and 3” vertically, and pull-out worksurfaces to give faculty abundant workspace and storage space. A small freestanding table welcomes a collaborative discussion with a colleague or student.

Nearly all faculty office includes a view of the Atlanta skyline through large windows that open to let in the fresh air. Lounge areas are right outside the office, labs just across the hall and grad student workspaces are nearby. There’s a feeling of active community in this building.

Groupwork areas are everywhere. The first floor offers several large conference spaces and a 200-seat auditorium, with other smaller meeting rooms available on every floor. Four balconies overlooking the atrium with comfortable, collaborative furniture are popular places to gather, and common areas outside each lab are like “welcome mats,” says McNay. “Faculty, grad students, and undergrads meet in these spaces, hang out, talk, collaborate.”

These communal areas support real work. Ubiquitous wireless access, plenty of power outlets, writing boards and display clips for “scientific graffiti” and a variety of furniture – choices range from Sidewalk™ lounge seating with convenient tablet arms to small group tables and stackable Cachet®

task chairs – support the highly collaborative nature of research and education.

To create what he calls “intimate spaces within large spaces,” Manuel Cadrecha, design principal on the project, uses Bix® modular bench-style lounge seating with back screens and a low table in between to form a booth-like gathering space. “We wanted the furniture to be comfortable, adaptable, and reconfigurable, so people can customize it for their own use.”

They’ve caught on quickly. “Students are working informally all over the building. One of the most popular spots is in a wide hallway with casual furniture, windows, and a big white board. I see a lot of students using that space, and they’re not necessarily from the computing college. They’ve just discovered the building,” says Zegura.

The building’s eight computer class labs and five large classrooms are also designed to be easily reconfigured to support small groups. Even the graduate student offices are planned for collaboration. Their four-person shared spaces support quiet, concentrated study, yet are typically connected to the lab spaces so the students can move readily between their offices and group research environments.

“Faculty members are really happy to be in the building. They’re excited about the quality of the space, about having grad students and labs near their offices, about being closer together,” says Zegura. she says that even prospective faculty are impressed by the new facility. “Faculty members spend a lot of their time in the classroom, the labs, and their offices. The quality of space, the quality of life issues are a big deal. There’s no doubt the building is helping us when we interview faculty candidates. We can say, ‘here’s your office,’ and that changes the conversation.”



The Klaus building was designed for sustainability and is expected to achieve LEED Gold certification. Some of the sustainable strategies include rainwater collection for irrigation, under-building parking to reclaim campus green space, windows that flood natural light throughout the building, and appropriate furniture specification. Chairs like Jersey and Think are good examples.

Jersey (shown in bottom photo) is 98% recyclable, and contains 27% recycled content, 50% from post-consumer material. The Think chair (shown in center photo) is the first to receive Cradle to Cradle Product Certification from McDonough Braungart Design Chemistry. It’s up to 99% recyclable by weight, and contains up to 44% recycled content. Both chairs are GREENGUARD Indoor Air Quality Certified.

“A lot of LEED points relate to occupant comfort,” says Ellen Zegura, chair of the School of Computer Science, and former Assistant Dean in charge of Space and Facilities Planning. “LEED is not only good for the environment, it’s good for people, too.”

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Products used:

Steelcase®: Cachet®, Jersey®, and Think® task seating; Player® guest seating; Universal worksurfaces

Metro®: Topo™ Systems Furniture; Bix® and Detour™ seating

Brayton®: Enea™ stools, Ripple™ and Sidewalk™ lounge seating

Turnstone®: Storage and mobile easels

Vecta®: Kart® seating, au lait, Runner™ and E-tables™, Werndl® Freewall™ space division, shelving, lecturns and tables

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