

The Vision for the Renovation of Weiser Hall



1963 – Physics and Astronomy Building



1976 – David M. Dennison Building



2017 – Weiser Hall

a brief history...



Weiser Hall
(formerly known as
the Dennison
Building – and,
before that, for
those of us around
in the early 1970s,
the Physics and
Astronomy
Building, or P+A
Building) was
constructed in
1963.

1963 –
Physics and Astronomy Building

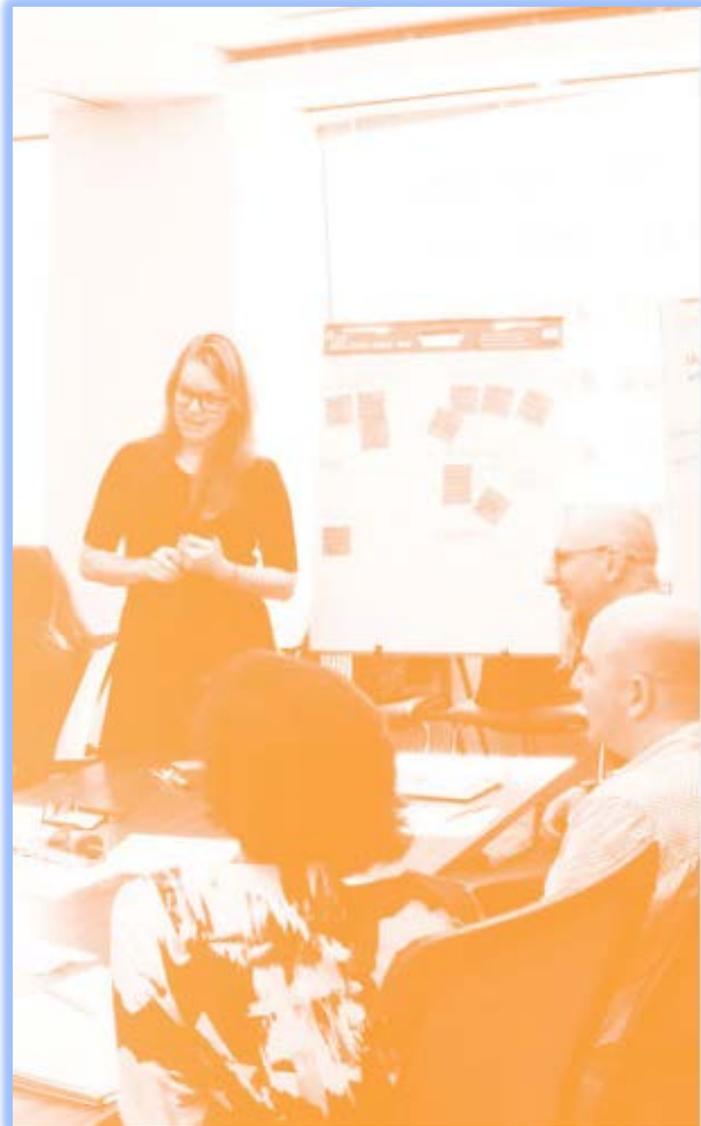
Repurpose? Upgrade?



With its **sterile concrete block walls, gloomy corridors and long waits at the elevators** at the change of classes, it is no wonder that most faculty who taught in the building, and students who attended classes there, would call it their **least favorite building on campus...**

In 2011, when the Provost and Registrar Offices undertook a study of classroom utilization on central campus, it was determined that **with more efficient scheduling and sharing of other existing facilities, it would be possible to eliminate the 43 substandard classrooms** in the high rise Dennison, and repurpose a structure in serious need of upgrade.

1976 – [David M. Dennison Building](#)



Dennison was to become a **model for an academic building whose design encourages the sharing of resources** (both people and space) and that has flexible, open spaces to allow for easy change of occupants.

The earliest occupants of the newly-christened Weiser Hall were:

- International Institute
- the Center for Global and Intercultural Study
- the Interdisciplinary Program in Organizational Studies
- the Barger Leadership Institute
- Center for the Study of Complex Systems

The building would become a “center of centers” with a roster of tenants focused on international, intercultural and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Few changes were needed to accommodate the added occupants, due to flexible design.

Occupants moving into Weiser Hall in the summer of 2017 are:

Original Occupants

- International Institute
- the Center for Global and Intercultural Study
- the Interdisciplinary Program in Organizational Studies
- the Barger Leadership Institute
- Center for the Study of Complex Systems

+ New Occupants

- Center for Engaged Academic Learning
- Center for the Study of Black Youth in Context
- Michigan Center for Applied and Interdisciplinary Mathematics
- Michigan Institute for Data Science
- Weinberg Institute for Cognitive Science
- English Language Institute

What was different about this project?



By way of an RFP process that reached out to consultants across the country, the College hired brightspot strategy of New York City in 2012. This marked the beginning of a planning process that was distinctly different from other projects undertaken by the College.

brightspot

Starting with a visioning strategist...

vision components



People

Support people with a shared sense of how their group identity relates to a global vision while bringing renewed focus to the undergraduate experience



Services

Enable work processes to be more fluid and fast so more apparent,



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Activities

Facilitate activities that create a lively and dynamic atmosphere, including formal and informal collaboration, events, study, and support services



Technology

Provide technology that acts as a gateway and seamless connection between people and ideas



Culture

Foster a culture that is globally engaged and supports different kinds of collaboration - across disciplines, among staff, within research teams, and among students



Space

Create a welcoming, "magnetic" place that draws a variety of people and facilitates both their interactions in shared spaces as well as their focus in private spaces. Accommodate changes and variable use through flexible, modular approaches.

Most projects begin with the hiring of an architect for programming to determine the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of space required for a building to function according to a stated purpose. By starting with a 'visioning strategist' to help us create a blueprint for the future state, we were able to consider the people, activities, culture, services, technology and space to shape operations of centers and institutes, faculty collaboration across boundaries of discipline and geographical space, and enhanced opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students.

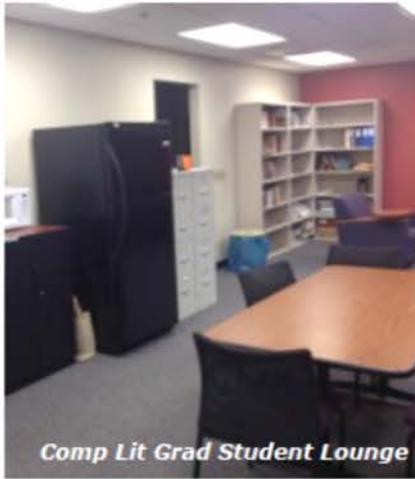
Space: Shared vs. Owned

owned ←

→ shared



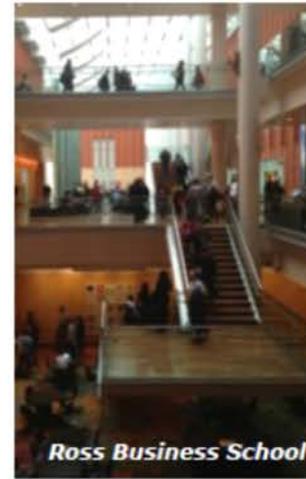
WCEE Lobby



Comp Lit Grad Student Lounge

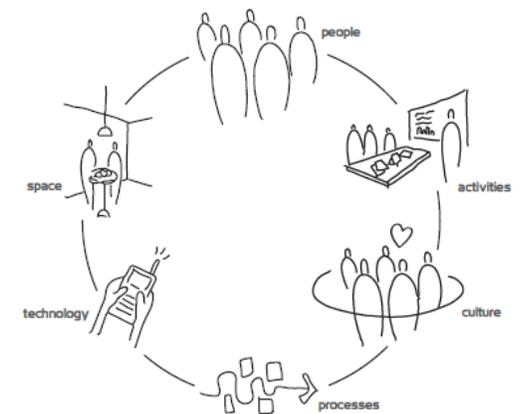


II First Floor Gallery



Ross Business School

Funding from the Provost was contingent on a process of planning and design that yielded the most **advanced architectural thinking** in the organization of work and collaboration space with an **emphasis on shared space** and other resources.



key programming strategies

Based on the findings and scenario assessments, five key planning and programming strategies drive the design and use of Dennison:

- **Plan for change:** plan the building to accommodate change with minimal costs by planning office spaces using 3 typical workplace typologies based on the occupant types
- **Provide coordinated and integrated services:** improve service quality, user experience, and awareness of opportunities through coordinated services and programs across all building units
- **Support a mix of users:** provide the spaces and services to support the appropriate mix of teaching, research, programming, and administrative work across units
- **Make it active:** provide the spaces, services and technology to support a wide range of activities throughout the day and semester
- **Enable serendipitous interaction:** create transitions points, with vertical connections and active spaces, to enable spontaneous interactions and promote collaboration across units

Brightspot spent several months interviewing and observing the groups to understand their unique missions, successes and challenges. They noted how existing space facilitated or hindered the delivery of service to students and collaboration among faculty. They sought out the visions of unit directors and the College leadership.

Appointing a Faculty Shepherd...



Twila Tardiff



Liz Cole

- This project was the first to appoint a “faculty shepherd” to be the liaison between the visioning strategists, design team and the faculty. Beginning with then-Associate Dean for Social Sciences, Twila Tardiff, now currently Liz Cole, the faculty shepherd has provided **academic leadership, oversight and communication with faculty**, typically outside of the reach of project planners.

Key Building Strategies



Specific,
key building
strategies
resulting from the
visioning process,
contained the
following
**“instructions” to
the architects:**

- Create an engaging and active first floor
- Enable a wide variety of activities through flexibly designed multipurpose rooms
- Create a welcoming entry point with information about events and opportunities
- Connect students to opportunities and services through advising outposts
- Zone floors to provide access to natural light and facilitate interaction
- Encourage serendipitous interaction throughout the building
- Provide a customizable “home base” for each unit to express their identity
- Create active hallways to direct people, share information and make work visible
- Design flexible offices to support different work styles
- Establish a center of activity for building residents

Create an engaging & active first floor

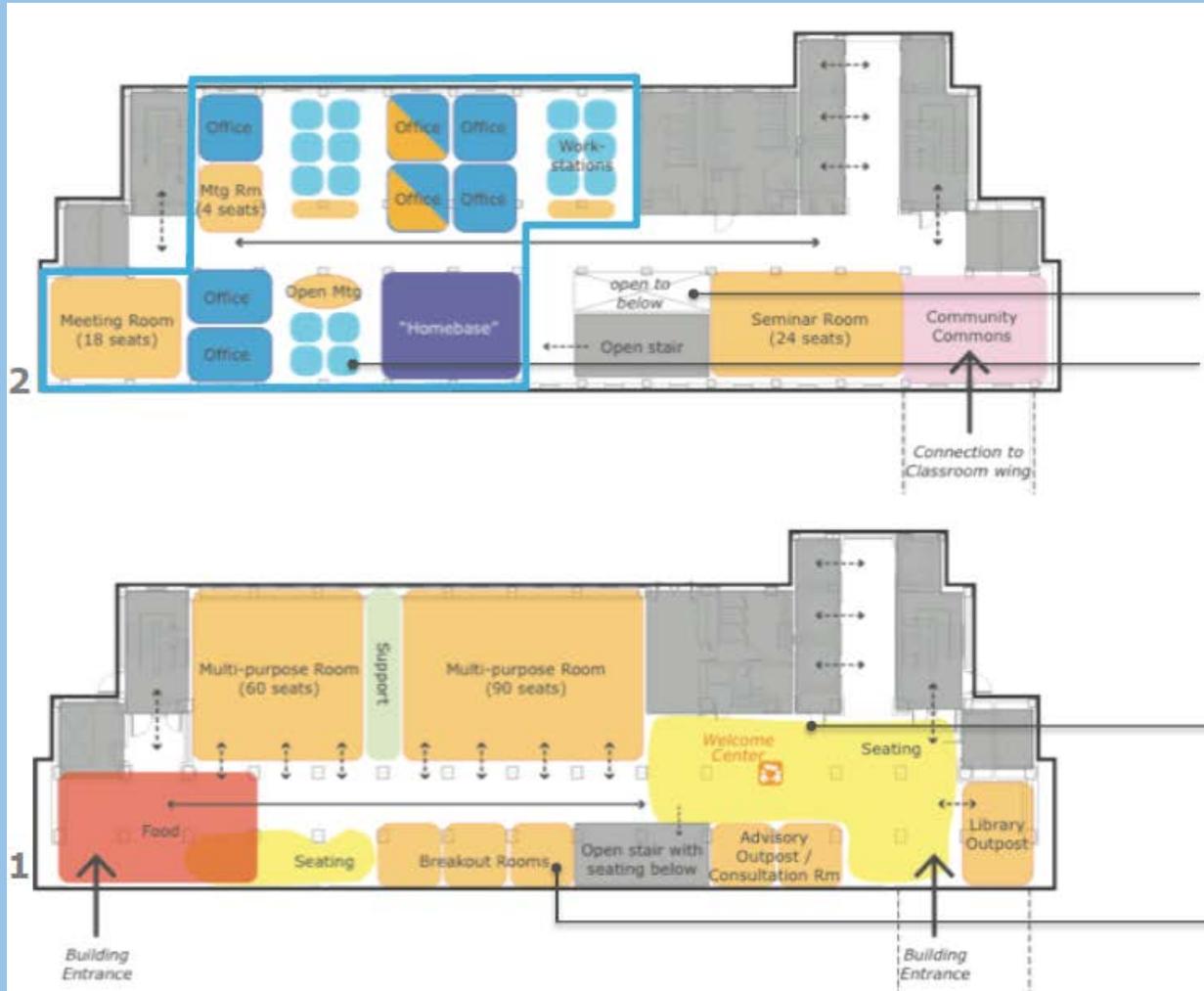


Enable a wide variety of activities through flexibly designed multipurpose rooms

Create a welcoming entry point with information about events and opportunities

Connect students to opportunities and services through advising outposts...

Create an engaging & active first floor



**Alternative layout options on page 109 & 110



Access to Natural Light & Facilitate Interaction



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Creation units

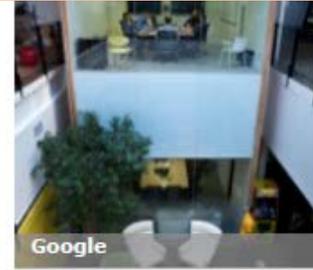
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Service Partner units

Connection to another Creation focused unit above

Connection to a Communication focused unit below

University of Michigan – Dennison Visioning and Programming

brightspot 68



Zone floors to provide access to natural light and facilitate interaction

Encourage serendipitous interaction throughout the building

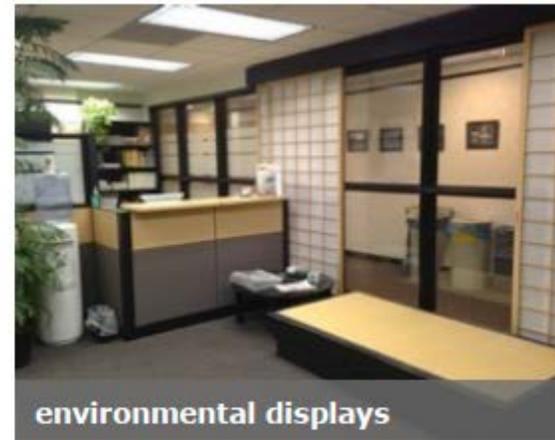
Design Facilitates Success



static displays



curated displays



environmental displays

Provide a **customizable “home base”** for each unit to express its identity

Create **active hallways to direct people**, share information and make work visible

Design **flexible offices** to support different work styles

Establish a **center of activity** for building residents

how specific layouts relate to individual unit demands

The area and layout of space is fixed, the use and division of space can be modified

A few rules of thumb:

- ***There must be 1.5 collaboration seats per FTE on a floor:*** while it is feasible to convert meeting rooms into offices, a floor must provide 1.5 collaboration seats (between meeting rooms, open meeting spaces, the home bases and community commons)
- ***All individual spaces (offices and workstations) require access to natural light:*** whether it is direct access through an adjacent window or indirect access through clear or frosted glass
- ***Community commons must remain "shared":*** across all units, irrespective of the floor they are on. Protocols and policies around the use of touch-down space, lockers, kitchens and other shared spaces will need to be developed to enforce this approach
- ***Shared Study, Lounge, and Research spaces should be distributed across floors:*** in order to provide equal access to these amenities across units

1.5 collaboration seats
per FTE per floor

All individual spaces require
access to natural light

Community commons must
remain shared

Shared Study, Lounge and
Research spaces should be
distributed across all floors



Now we will hear from
the architects,
Donald Schmitt, Principal,
and
Erin Broda, Architect,
of **Diamond Schmitt
Architects**
to see how the vision was
carried out in the building
renovation.