

## Place-Based Educational Development: What Center for Teaching and Learning Spaces Look Like (and Why That Matters)

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### Abstract

This study seeks to explore the physical spaces centers for teaching and learning (CTLs) occupy, with an emphasis on gaining a better picture of what CTL spaces look like, where they are located, how they developed, and what these spaces represent. We gathered visual, empirical, and qualitative data not only to take the first steps toward developing a shared vision of our physical spaces but also as a jumping-off point for further analysis of the CTL as a meaningful place.

**Keywords:** educational development; academic spaces; integrated centers for teaching and learning; organizational development

If you were asked to close your eyes and picture what a university looks like, a number of different visions may come to mind: a postcard view of brick buildings and tall trees, a lecture hall full of students, the view from your office window, or perhaps a map of the building and grounds. Each of these visions is valid, but they all represent different conceptions of a complex institution that simultaneously occupies physical, philosophical, functional, sociological, economic, and political space. Unlike the modern university, conceptions of which are strongly rooted in fourteenth-century

Europe, the field of educational development does not have a substantial historical legacy from which to draw upon, so if we were to close our eyes and imagine an educational development space, that is, a center for teaching and learning (CTL), what visions might such an exercise evoke? For this study, we shed light on the physical, economic, and political aspects of current CTL spaces, a vision that contributes to larger questions of the role of space and place in educational development.

In the United States, CTLs first emerged in the 1960s, with a significant period of proliferation through the 1980s. Without a strong or systematic mechanism for comparing notes, many original CTL spaces reflected local, rather than field-specific, conditions. And this was not just because of prevailing budgets or architectural trends. As relative latecomers to the landscape of higher education, educational development pioneers often lacked the ability to create fully new spaces and instead had to settle for adapting, repurposing, or modifying existing spaces. One venerable CTL, for example, is located inside a former chapel, with heavy, ornate oak doors separating consultant offices from meeting rooms and collaborative spaces.

Like universities, CTLs are more than just physical spaces. Scholars draw a distinction between the university as a space and the university as a place (Temple, 2009). As a space, it is the domain of architects, senior administrators, and space committees, their work measured by capital funding campaigns and utilization metrics. As a place, the campus is about how various stakeholders experience it and how they make meaning from those experiences (Beyes & Michels, 2011, 2014; Cox, 2011; Temple, 2014). That meaning could take the form of learning, as in new classrooms, but it can also take the form of other intangible factors, such as optimism, belonging, or inspiration. In many ways, CTLs serve as a microcosm for all of these layers of meaning, especially for the faculty and staff they serve. In this sense, our spaces function like a “little world” for the lived experience of teaching and teachers (Ossa-Richardson, 2014).

This overlapping of space and place is based on a growing body of theoretical literature that makes significant connections between physical environment and the strength of social identity (Stedman, 2002);

the building of relationships (Tuan, 2002); the fostering of behaviors, such as productivity and creativity (Florida, 2003); and perhaps most importantly for the current study, the facilitation of learning and growth (Wenger, 1998). For this reason, classroom space has been studied intensively not only by educational researchers but also by social psychologists, human geographers, industrial engineers, and others who have suggested that classrooms function in ways that are similar to other forms of community (Solomon et al., 1996; Tinto, 2000).

Educational researchers have paid particular attention to how the attributes of classroom space, ranging from color to furniture configuration, can impede or facilitate evidence-based teaching and learning practices, such as small group work, inquiry-based learning, or inverted/flipped classrooms (Chism, & Bickford, 2002; Edwards & Usher, 2003; Lim et al., 2012; Rook et al., 2015). Both large- and small-scale empirical studies have been conducted on the efficacy of classroom configurations known as learning spaces, which were developed specifically to reimagine classroom space in an effort to maximize cognitive, affective, and behavioral student learning outcomes (Brooks, 2012; Granito & Santana, 2016). Although research in this area is ongoing, U.S.-based universities have been transforming an increasing number of their traditional classrooms into learning spaces, which, at this larger institutional scale, have been shown to increase attendance rates, decrease failure rates, and enhance student engagement (Baepler et al., 2016; Brooks, 2011, 2012; Goodyear et al., 2018; Lippincott, 2006; Long & Ehrmann, 2005; Oblinger, 2006; Walker et al., 2011).

While awareness of the link between classroom space and learning has grown considerably, less is known about how physical space affects other parts of a university community. In many institutions, learning space models have been expanded to include co-curricular spaces (especially libraries, where CTLs are often located), further studies of which have affirmed the connections between informal (i.e., non-classroom) learning and physical space (Harrop & Turpin, 2013; Riddle & Souter, 2012; Turner et al., 2013). While such studies may include users of the space other than students, such as faculty or staff, their role is often either incidental or instrumental; that is, their function is to bring students to the

space. Educational development research has long recognized the role of faculty as learners (Eddy & Garza Mitchell, 2012; Mulnix, 2016), but this positionality has yet to be applied to research on space.

Similarly, little to no systematic attention has been paid to how the theories and constructs developed by the learning space movement might affect the design of other non-student-centered university spaces, such as centers for teaching and learning. This may seem surprising, as educational developers have often been key players in the learning space initiatives, lending expertise in pedagogy, educational technology, assessment, and organizational change. On many campuses, we (educational developers) have received a seat at the table, joining architects, facilities managers, students, faculty, and other campus stakeholders in collaborative projects (Baepler & Walker, 2014; Casanova et al., 2018; Graham, 2012; Siering et al., 2015). With this study, the researchers sought to turn the tables, so to speak, and apply the collective expertise of educational developers to our own spaces.

The present study began with the intent to gain a better picture of what CTL spaces look like, where they are located, how they developed, and what these spaces represent. The study includes visual, empirical, and qualitative data gathered in an effort to take the first steps toward creating the elusive shared vision but also as a jumping-off point for further analysis of the CTL not just as objective space but as a meaningful place. These findings will be useful to those who find themselves in the position of advocating for space, such as directors of new centers, or assessing the use of space, such as directors of existing centers looking to expand or remodel, or those, regardless of rank, who are seeking to cultivate a collective sense of community, an environment of pedagogical experimentation and innovation, and a place for educational development to happen.

## **What Do CTL Spaces Look Like?**

When CTLs were just starting to proliferate across the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, prospective center directors would often travel

to neighboring institutions to get a vision of what might be possible. Today, however, current estimates suggest that there are over 2,000 CTLs in the United States alone, making the previous grand tour process challenging to emulate or replicate. Fortunately, there is someone who has done much of this work for us. From 2005 to 2020, Martin Springborg, a professional photographer and educational developer,



Figure 1. Images of CTL Spaces

CTLs depicted, clockwise from top left: The Pennsylvania State University, Elon University, University of Michigan, Brown University, Marquette University, Brown University.

All photos used with full permission of photographer and subjects.

has toured campuses all across the country, making photographs of what faculty and students do, both inside and outside of their classrooms. These pictures are part of an ongoing project intended to provide visual evidence of the teaching and learning process, and educational developers are encouraged to sit down with the faculty and reflect on the meaning of what is taking place in the images. As a by-product of this larger project, Springborg has also amassed a collection of photos that depict CTL spaces. While these images were not produced specifically for this study, the following examples in Figure 1 illuminate the interactions that take place between educational developers and faculty in these spaces.

In a literal sense, these photographs do answer the question of what CTL spaces look like. That being said, although these images provide us with a vision of what is possible for a CTL space, their function is largely to paint a picture or evoke a feeling, not to make representative claims. The sample is neither comprehensive nor systematic, and the images were captured through the eye of a singular artist. The researchers decided to supplement the visions of the possible evoked in these snapshots with a more in-depth look across an even wider variety of CTLs.

## **What Are the Characteristics of a CTL's Physical Space?**

To gain a baseline for understanding the physical space of a CTL, we administered a national-level survey through the Professional and Organizational Development (POD) Network's group email distribution list. One of educational development's premier organizations, the POD Network has a membership of approximately 1,600 to 1,800 largely U.S.-based educational developers and assured us the greatest representation of CTLs across institutional types. The institutional review board-approved survey consisted of 21 questions, divided into three parts: institutional information (with responses indicated via drop-down menus); an environmental scan of existing CTL space (using

Likert-scaled items); and an overview of strategies used to develop, design, and procure space (with open-ended responses). Initial survey items were subjected to face validity in the form of review by two experts and content validity through a small focus group (3). The survey was open and active for three weeks, resulting in the receipt of 170 voluntary, completed responses—a response rate of roughly 10%. The results were imported from Qualtrics to an Excel spreadsheet and then analyzed using Tableau. Null responses were recorded, but the researchers chose to exclude them for the purposes of description and analysis, unless otherwise noted.

The majority of the respondents to the survey indicated that their institutions did have a CTL or similar unit ( $n = 145$ , 94%); that the center had dedicated space ( $n = 129$ , 84%); that this space measured between zero to 1,500 square feet ( $n = 47$ , 35%); and that the center was located in the library ( $n = 50$ , 36%), though academic buildings were a very close second ( $n = 47$ , 34%). Nearly half ( $n = 45$ %) reported that the size of their center had not changed over the previous three years ( $n = 77$ , 45%), and a slightly higher number ( $n = 78$ , 57%) reported that they did not anticipate changes to their space over the next five years. These apparent similarities, however, belie the complexity and divergence of practice that became evident on closer examination of our results.

As an example of that diversity, libraries may have won out over other locations for CTLs, but the margin of victory was very slim; libraries were followed closely by academic buildings, administrative buildings, and others (Figure 2). In addition to some variability by institutional type, the responses in the “other” category ranged widely, including a repurposed family home, law school, chapel, and women’s dormitory; multi-unit or “catch all” centers, including other units such as the post office or regional studies office; classroom-only buildings; and virtual campuses. Respondents indicated that the location of the CTL was one of the primary challenges they faced, and many emphasized the need to be in a building that was centrally located on campus as well as have access to a space within that building. For example,

one respondent pointed out that “while the library itself is centrally located, the Center is not in a central location in the library. Nor is it easy to find. It is located in the far end of the basement of the library. We tend to do more work outside of the Center by going to the departments.” Another suggested that while their location was once central, shifting campus construction has changed that: “[We are] located on the edge of campus, out of the primary traffic flows for faculty. This has become worse over the last few years as new academic buildings opened on the other side of campus, resulting in academic buildings near the Teaching Center now being used for other purposes.”

Our findings also reveal considerable variation by institutional type (Figure 3). The largest number of respondents reported their institution’s Carnegie classification as a doctoral/research university ( $n = 35$ , 23%) with 10,000 or more full-time students ( $n = 87$ , 56%), percentages that are roughly commensurate with responses to the POD Network’s membership survey ( $n = 410$ ; Collins-Brown et al., 2016). These

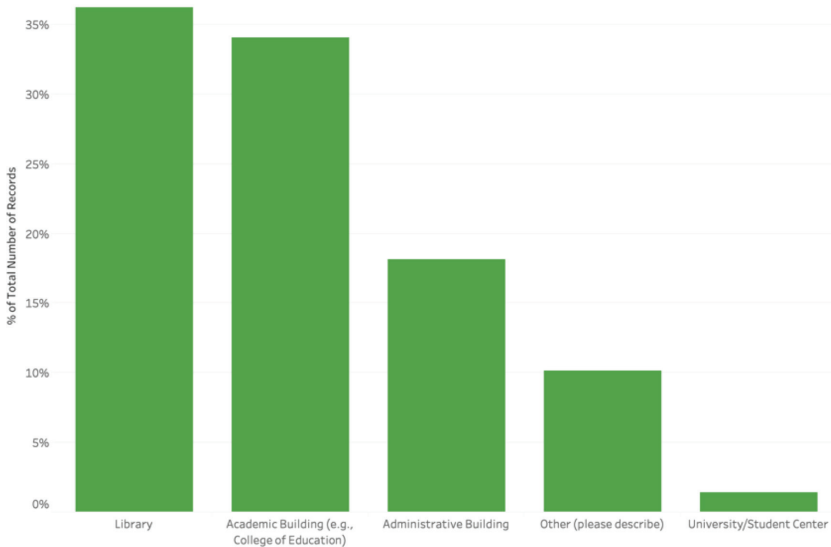


Figure 2. CTL Space Survey, (Reported) Location of CTL on Campus



results are perhaps not surprising for several reasons. In the early history of the field, large, research-focused institutions were often the first to have the right mixture of both vision and the resources needed to found CTLs. The CTL at the University of Michigan, for example, is the oldest in the United States, and the staff recently celebrated its 50th anniversary (Cook & Kaplan, 2011). That being said, the field has continued to expand since the 1980s and to embrace a wide range of institutional sizes and types (Ortquist-Ahrens, 2016; Sorcinelli et al., 2006). Survey respondents indicated 17 different institutional types (using the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education), and a significant number specify student populations between 1,000 and 2,999 ( $n = 20$ , 13%) and 3,000 to 9,999 ( $n = 41$ , 27%).

It stands to reason that larger universities may have larger CTLs. Bigger institutions have more faculty to serve, which creates demand for a larger number of services and staff members to provide those services. This situation, in turn, means that these CTLs have a larger number of potential respondents to our survey. In the consent form associated with the survey, the researchers did ask that respondents limit their responses to one per unit, but it is unknown the extent to which this request was heeded. If the results are viewed through this

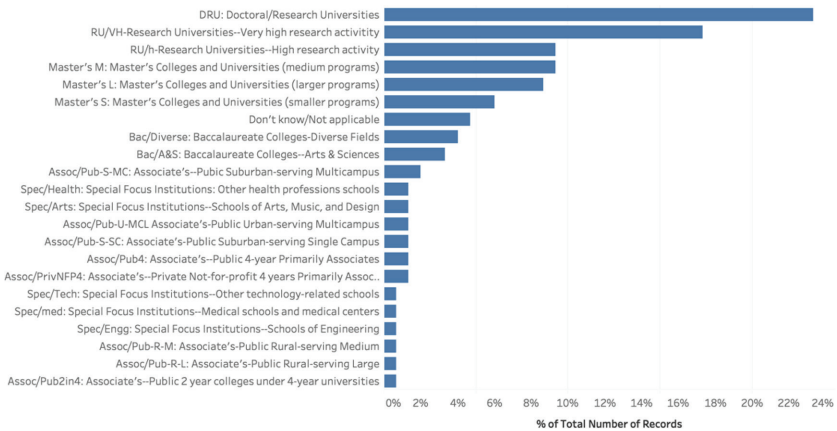


Figure 3. CTL Space Survey: Respondents by Institutional Type (Carnegie Classification)

grain of salt, however, it should be noted that larger institutions did not necessarily report having more space for their CTLs. Although the number of reported cases to support this hypothesis (3) is too low for anything other than speculation, there does appear to be some basis to suggest that at some point, institutions may hit a critical mass, when it becomes more efficient to create multiple centers rather than maintaining a single, large centralized office. With this exception in mind, it should be noted that in all responding institutions, the size of the CTL is not as strongly correlated to institutional size as it is to institutional type, with liberal arts and research institutions tending to have larger CTLs than other types of institutions.

There are further correlations that can be made with these responses. To develop the profiles below, the researchers put the survey responses through two filtration processes, one by response and another for an institution type or size. The first filtration process was created by placing the Carnegie classification question and the question variable in the columns with the count variable in the rows. Then, the answer choice that had the majority of responses (mode) by percentage was recorded in the table. What emerges from these correlations are profiles that indicate distinctive patterns of relationships between CTL space and institutional type (Table 1).

It should be noted that the strength of these profiles is dependent on the variability of responses within each category. For example, all of the community colleges that participated in this study ( $n = 15$ ) reported having a CTL on campus (though in one case it lacked a dedicated space), but they also showed the widest range in the size of their CTLs (independent of full-time enrollment), making generalizations difficult. This contrasts with responses from master's granting institutions (a large subset of which are referred to as regional or state comprehensive universities), which showed the least variability. While somewhat smaller on average than the research-intensive institutions, the regional comprehensives were largely characterized by single, dedicated, centralized CTL spaces, between zero to 1,500 square feet in size (Table 1). This apparent consistency was paired with stability, in

**Table 1. Reported Characteristics of CTL Space (mode), by Institutional Type**

Attributes	Associates	Liberal Arts	Masters	Research
Size	0-1500 Sq.ft	0-5000 Sq.ft	0-1500 Sq.ft	0-5000 Sq.ft
Location	Academic	Academic	Library	Administration
Top Program	Distance/Online	Writing	Instructional Tech	Grad Development
Expected Upgrades	No	No	No	No
Previous Upgrades	No	Yes	No	No

that most CTLs at this level had not experienced recent changes, and few anticipated changes in the near future.

### What Are the Characteristics of a CTL's Functional Space?

The survey responses revealed that CTL spaces serve several primary functions. Perhaps first and foremost, they are *productivity spaces*, that is, places where the staff work. This may include office space but also ancillary space such as storage areas, break rooms, or kitchens. Second, they are *learning spaces* where faculty development programming takes place, whether in the form of formal workshops, learning communities, or consultations. When asked which space was most functional (i.e., used by faculty and other clients), the majority of respondents ( $n = 59$ , 52%) answered, somewhat unsurprisingly, that their workshop and/or conference spaces saw the most traffic, but the question revealed, albeit indirectly, other functions of CTL spaces. Two respondents, for example, mentioned the CTL library as a place that attracted clients, though it will be interesting to see how well this function stands the test of time as many libraries move away from physical collections. Similarly, three respondents mentioned their computer labs or workstations, a function that may also be challenged by the test of time with the shift to ubiquitous computing on many college campuses. On a forward-looking trajectory, four respondents emphasized the value of their experimental classroom or studio, usually a small-capacity space (one response indicated seating up to 25) where

faculty could experiment with new approaches and classroom configurations, among other uses.

The survey responses suggested a potential tension between these two functions (productivity and learning) in the form of a debate of the relative merits of open spaces. Similar to the open design of active learning classrooms, an open layout is believed to facilitate (perhaps even model) collaboration among the staff as well as between staff, faculty, and students. Others expressed concerns that an open concept is not only distracting for staff but that it can even have ill effects on health, from headaches to shared germs. Similarly, the need for appropriate noise management and/or attention to acoustics is a facet of space management that several respondents ( $n = 5$ ) indicated as both problematic and unexpected. There does seem to be consensus on the need for at least some private spaces for the purposes of holding confidential consultations, though the extent to which these need to be dedicated spaces varied from institution to institution.

While productivity and learning spaces predominated, a smaller number of survey respondents mentioned the CTL as a *social space*, and there are some indications from the literature that this facet should not be neglected. Seminal research in sociology emphasizes the theoretical relationship between social interaction and space (Feldman & Tilly, 1960; Latané et al., 1995), and this connection is reinforced by social learning theories, which often form the basis for classroom designs intended to facilitate collaboration between students or between the student and the instructor (Johnson & Lomas, 2005). Not unlike informal spaces for students, the social aspects of their spaces were emphasized by a number of respondents, who indicated that they want to encourage faculty just to “hang out” together. A community space, noted one respondent, “needs color, play objects, comfy and varied furniture, displays on the walls, [and] coffee and snacks out front.” In response to the challenge of getting faculty to visit the office, another respondent indicated that “we make an effort to create a warm, inviting, community-building environment: coffee is always brewing, bottled water always available, fresh flowers, snacks at most

workshops, someone always at the front desk to greet visitors. Faculty say they like to come to our space and some stop by just for coffee when they're in the library." Items such as coffee or flowers can often be challenging to justify as budget line items, but our survey results suggest that they can add significant value to a CTL's social function.

A number of respondents ( $n = 27$ , 23%) emphasized the need for balancing between these functions (productivity, learning, and social) as well as flexibility in how the space is used to meet them. There were numerous suggestions for sharing lesser-used spaces with campus partners but also a number of concerns about the logistical challenges of scheduling shared spaces, including competition and lack of availability of suitable spaces for CTL events and programs. As one respondent lamented, "We have to rely on the university to provide spaces large enough for our seminars, which often means that we are at the mercy of their schedule—not ours." And if that strategy does not succeed, another respondent advocated for the use of multiple strategies to maximize functionality: "Get furniture that is easily rearranged for various types of events/activities. We often use other nearby spaces when needed (classrooms, meeting rooms, etc.). We've even used the campus as a living lab (outdoor spaces, the museum, etc.). Offer some training/activities online and/or go to faculty (go to department meetings, their space, etc.)." In keeping with the latter, a handful of respondents ( $n = 4$ , 3%) suggested the use of virtual or hybrid environments or tools as a means of enhancing social space, especially with those faculty or staff who are not co-located, including those based at satellite campuses (Acker, 1995).

Based on the responses to our survey, it would appear that most CTL spaces share the desire to provide productivity, learning, and social functions. That being said, the respondents showed considerably more variability when it came to the integration of different facets of faculty or educational development beyond conventional pedagogical support. As a number of scholars have noted, there has been an increasing trend toward the integration of multiple faculty development offices under the umbrella of a central CTL office or

space (Frantz et al., 2004; Kelley et al., 2017; Schroeder, 2015). Drawing upon that literature, the researchers asked respondents to indicate which of the most common of these areas or programs are part of their CTL, operating under the assumption that the inclusion of these new or growing responsibilities would likely impact the use of space (see Figure 4).

These findings affirm the divergence in CTL scope suggested by previous studies and, by extension, a divergence in use of space. It is perhaps not surprising that given their respective missions, research institutions would be more likely to include graduate student development, master’s-level institutions more likely to include service learning, and community colleges more likely to include staff and professional development. What is perhaps more surprising are the larger patterns of integration of either distance/online education or instructional technology. From the responses to our survey, it would appear that the move to integrated CTLs is more prevalent at the master’s- and

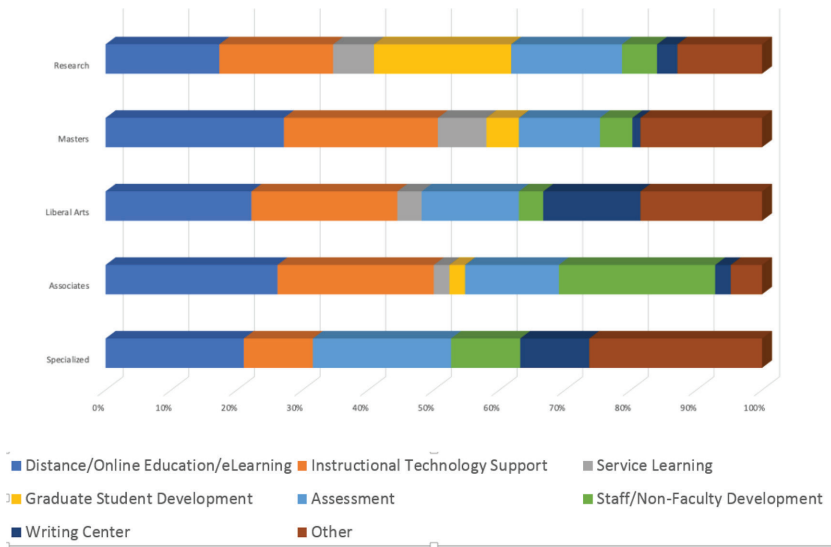


Figure 4. *POD Network Space Survey: (Reported) Additional Programs Included in CTL Scope (percentage of total, by institutional type)*

associate's-level institutions and less common for research or specialized institutions.

This pattern takes on additional impact when correlated with responses to a question about recent upgrades to CTL spaces (Figure 5). The inclusion of either distance education or instructional technology under the scope of the CTL correlated strongly with investments not only in upgraded technology ( $n = 30$ , 33%) but also in collaborative space ( $n = 21$ , 25%) and furniture ( $n = 34$ , 40%). Those CTLs who include technology support were also more likely to anticipate upgrades in the near future ( $n = 30$ , 38%) and to highlight advanced technology as a distinctive feature of their CTL (examples provided included multimedia studios, lightboards, and Nemo Bars).

The fact that the integration of technology may lead to increased resources at the disposal of the CTL is suggestive of how an institution prioritizes and distributes its limited resources. In other words, the study now enters the domain of politics.

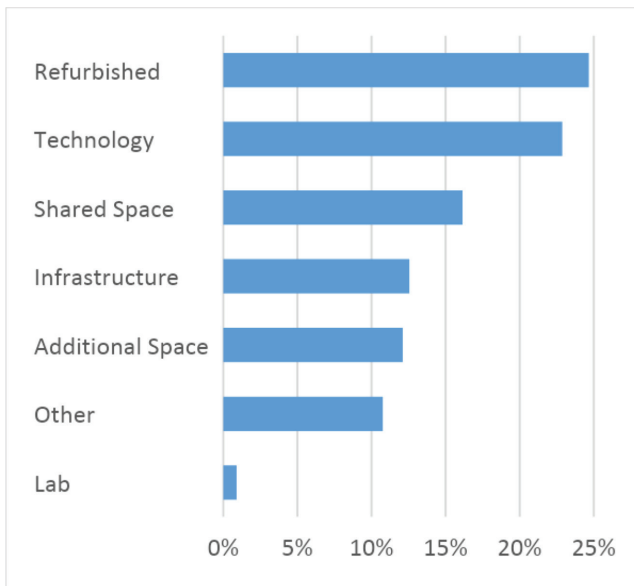


Figure 5. POD Network Space Survey: (Reported) Upgrades to CTL Space (past three years)

## What Are the Characteristics of a CTL's Political Space?

As a finite resource itself, space is highly politicized on most, if not all, college campuses, and CTL space is no exception. A majority of our survey respondents indicated that they expect changes to be made to their space over the next five years, so most, if not all, CTL directors will need to have strategies at their disposal for articulating the value of their current and future spaces. Even if a CTL already has appropriate space, this does not mean that they are immune to the politics of space. As one respondent put it, "Space is in high demand at our school, and we are always having to 'defend our territory' (we have a large and beautiful space)." And another director in a similar predicament commented, "I had to fight way up the ladder to hold our space and attempts to encroach on the space are ever present." Another noted, "Our campus is growing very quickly so we're losing space as more related units need it." At least one third of our respondents indicated directly that the politics of spaces has affected their current and planned space usage, and several suggested that they feel powerless, frustrated, or dispirited. To meet this need, the researchers asked our survey respondents to provide examples of their most effective strategies for defending, expanding, or remodeling their spaces.

Using an emergent coding model, the researchers analyzed these qualitative responses in three stages. The three raters first independently reviewed the entirety of the responses for common themes, those themes were then merged across the raters (and entered into NVivo), and, finally, the raters worked together to code the entire data set based on the five emergent themes: fostering flexible, multi-use spaces; gathering external support; aligning with institutional priorities demonstrating demand; articulating an evidence base; and thinking creatively.

In terms of flexibility, respondents suggested not only multi-use spaces and modular space design (e.g., microspaces) but also flexible thinking. As one suggested, "Be flexible with your expectations. Be willing to go into spaces that others might suggest." In terms of



external support, in addition to support from the usual suspects, such as your advisory board and senior administrators, respondents also suggested other potential allies, including faculty governance bodies, libraries, information technology (IT) units, the university architect, facilities management, and even members of the local community.

That support from outside of the CTL is linked to how the change in your space is framed, especially how well it aligns with larger institutional mission and goals, at least according to the suggestions received. In addition to institution-specific outcomes (including accreditation), our respondents suggested that faculty development space can be credibly linked to a host of benefits for faculty, including morale, recruitment, and retention. Because they support teaching transformation, too, such spaces can be integral to student learning initiatives (Wright et al., 2018), another common institutional priority. And these benefits can parlay into a leadership role for the campus; as one respondent suggested, "Teaching is undergoing a significant shift as well as the changing student population. Centers will need additional staff, space, learning labs etc. in order to ensure that the university is on the cutting edge of learning."

The use of the term *cutting edge* in the preceding quote is evocative of several responses ( $n = 6$ ) that referenced innovation and/or creative problem-solving when it comes to addressing space challenges. This includes brainstorming or ideation sessions for creative repurposing of existing space; borrowing from the literature on "hacking" learning spaces; and proactively searching for new ideas, spaces, or opportunities. As one respondent emphasized, "Iterate on new space designs," and another suggested, "Always be on the lookout for new ideas." It is also possible that there may be opportunities for faculty developers to work together and address where the cutting edge of learning design for CTLs may be heading; as one respondent stated, "I'd love to be part of a group that 'thinks outside the box' on this."

The majority of respondents suggested strategies that rely on either the existing needs of faculty and students or established practice, whether drawn from the research literature or best practices from

other institutions. Most emphasized the use of data: for example, "Show how you would use it, specifically. If you have data that shows the need, use it. If you don't, get it" or "Data is always important." In addition to participation data, our colleagues suggested articulating potential opportunity costs, efficiencies, and capacities. A small number ( $n = 3$ ) suggested supplementing quantitative data with qualitative insights, including artifacts such as videos of faculty teaching (applying what they learned from your center) and/or the functionality of effective CTLs from peer (or aspirational peer) institutions. That being said, there is more limited discussion of how to close the loop and assess the effectiveness of the CTL space in meeting those needs and/or following the identified best practices.

Assessment of CTL space constitutes a significant challenge in the field. Administrators commonly assess use of space through utilization metrics. Our survey did not ask respondents directly about their space utilization after researchers surmised that the majority of CTLs either do not assess or do not participate directly in assessments of their space utilization, making it difficult for potential respondents to provide accurate responses. This hypothesis was confirmed by responses to the last question on the survey, in which 80% of the respondents indicated that they did not participate directly in space assessment of any kind, and 25% indicated that they tracked head count usage only. In a handful of cases ( $n = 4$ ), participation numbers were supplemented with ethnographic studies (of learning spaces), tours (face-to-face and virtual), focus group interviews, and survey questions, but these were the exception rather than the rule. In several cases, the respondents recognized the need for such an assessment (e.g., "no, but we should," "no, but a good idea," "not yet"). A few ( $n = 3$ ) provided specific incentives: "Discussions within administration on the need for doing so have begun and I imagine it's only a matter of time before more systematic space evaluations are more regularly conducted," and "The Office of the Provost has just hired a consulting firm that will take a look at all the existing spaces on campus, evaluate them regarding their utilization, and then prepare a report regarding

effective/efficient utilization of space. I'm really looking forward to the process."

## **What Are the Characteristics of the CTL as a Cultural Space?**

Part of the assessment dilemma lies in determining what it is we wish to measure about our spaces. The transition from space to place involves moving from a tangible, readily observable phenomenon into the domain of the cultural, influences which are perhaps even more challenging to assess (Gruenewald, 2003). In many ways, educational developers are trained to think like anthropologists, especially as we engage with faculty who hail from a multitude of different disciplinary cultures. This propensity is reinforced by shifts in our field. As we transition from being primarily service providers to agents of change, this necessitates attention to institutional culture and the cultivation of shared community values (Felten et al., 2007).

When asked what was distinctive about their CTL space, a number of respondents emphasized what the space symbolized to the campus (Fugazzotto, 2009). The iconography could be direct, such as the message sent by having the CTL centrally located or perceptions of its relative size and condition. As one respondent remarked, "The amount and quality of the space allocated to a teaching center is a reflection of how important teaching and quality student learning is to the institution." Others suggested more implied meanings, such as the how the productivity space "seamlessly integrates" pedagogy and technology, how the workshop space models exemplary teaching practice, how the remodeling reflects an institutional investment in innovation, and how a location near a campus-designated free speech area influences a sense of agency.

That sense of place, or meaning attached to the CTL space, may run even deeper. In addition to providing meaning by reflecting values and beliefs, a place can also function as a source of identity. According to theorists in human geography, physical space can provide a

focal point for individuals to determine their individual and social value (Proshansky et al., 1983). Outside of individual offices, many campuses lack a dedicated space that is just for faculty, except, of course, for the CTL (D'Avanzo, 2009). Our respondents frequently described their space as "faculty-friendly." Others took the idea of place-identity a step further. For example, one director noted that "one huge plus is that this is the faculty's space. . . . They know it is theirs and they feel comfortable, welcomed, and at ease." And place-identity occurs even if a person is not physically present in the space. As another respondent noted, "When faculty are present here, that is the impression they have, but perhaps even more important is the impression they have when they are not here. So, we use promotion of each and every event as an opportunity to keep awareness of how actively used our space is and that it is FOR faculty."

When redesigning the University of Sussex, architect Basil Spence suggested that "there should be areas of completeness . . . [w]here students go and realize that this is their own little world" (as quoted in Ossa-Richardson, 2014). If we were to substitute the word *faculty* for *students* in the preceding quote, then perhaps a CTL space could be that little world, one which provides an often-elusive sense of purpose and belonging.

## **What Is the Future of CTL Spaces?**

Across higher education, there have been many discussions of what student-centered space should look like, but the researchers intend for this study to be the beginning of conversations about what "faculty-centered" space means and what it can look like. Our findings suggest that these discussions are overdue. Higher education in general has been slow to enter into conversations about the spatial dimensions of what universities do, perhaps because there is a marked tendency to disassociate what they do from space or place and instead imagine it either as a relationship between people, that is, wherever you have a

teacher and a student and teaching and learning takes place, or as an disembodied ideal, such as cultivating the life of the mind (Keohane, 2006). The results of this survey suggest that there is a need to identify, develop, and cultivate university spaces (outside of classrooms) that stand as physical markers of the productive, pedagogical, social, political, and cultural value of teaching and learning and, by extension, the faculty who provide them.

This process starts with developing a vision of what a CTL looks like, either in terms of its physical layout, features, or location, and to cultivate a vision that is both systematic (rather than anecdotal) and sufficiently flexible to capture the divergence in scope and, by extension, practice that has emerged in our field. To this end, the authors propose the creation of a centralized database or repository that could include a number of different artifacts, such as photographs, videos, architectural diagrams, proposals (both successful and unsuccessful), budgets, and other related documents, that indicate the physical (and related) attributes of a CTL space. When asked if they would contribute to such a repository, 83% ( $n = 105$ ) of our survey respondents said yes, and 80% ( $n = 113$ ) stated that they would make use of such a resource should it be created. This repository would have a practical value: it would make it easier for new center directors to include appropriate space as part of their initial "big ask" (Cruz et al., 2020), a request frequently made on the POD Network's listserv, and for standing directors to explore the possibilities for expanding, repurposing, or protecting existing space, but it may also serve as the basis for further lines of inquiry that arise when considering space and place in educational development.

That basis should not be overstated, as the responses to this survey constitute only 10% of the members of a professional organization that includes most, but not all, full-time educational developers in the United States. This is a weak proxy for the field as a whole, which includes those colleagues who did not have the time or inclination to fill out another electronic survey, other higher education professionals with educational development responsibilities, and educational

developers located outside of the United States and Canada. Although this is a limitation of the current study, it could serve as the basis of a robust research agenda that includes more comprehensive analysis and assessment of CTL spaces, even drawing in feedback from a broader range of stakeholders, including senior leaders. In practice, much of the design of CTL spaces has been based on learning space studies, but our survey shows that CTLs serve many functions that are distinct from student learning and that our spaces have political and cultural dimensions that classroom spaces do not. It may be time to look at our CTL spaces as a subject of study in their own right.

Advocates and researchers have articulated a transformative role for classrooms as learning spaces, placing them at the vanguard for larger movements to shift institutional practices and priorities toward student success, engagement, and collaboration (Mulcahy et al., 2015; Oblinger, 2006). In a similar vein, we are concerned with the spaces educational developers occupy. Educational developers, too, seek to be agents of institutional change, so it may be possible to view our space in light of this emerging role. A recent assessment matrix for CTLs, initiated by the American Council on Education (ACE) and promoted for use by senior administrators, includes space as a major category (Haras et al., 2017), but the value is measured largely by its existence (or lack thereof) and not by its meaning. The responses to our survey suggest that when we promote the size and composition of our spaces, we do so not simply to support our existence but as advocates for the value and well-being of our faculty. This value can be challenging to capture, much less quantify, but perhaps we should be prepared, as a field, to rise to this challenge, especially in light of the increase in competing demands for university space and, by extension, priority.

We serve not just as champions of faculty but also as role models for good practice, including the meaningful and authentic assessment of learning outcomes. It therefore stands to reason that we may also be at the forefront of thinking deeply about how to measure the spatial dimensions of our work and devise innovative ways to move

beyond the baseline of utilization counts and continuous improvement studies. As educational developers, we have a unique vantage point in higher education, one in which we are able to see across disciplines, so that we can draw together multiple tools and perspectives for looking at space and place. In this study, we have relied heavily on research in education and information technology, but we have also included emerging theoretical and conceptual work drawn from fields such as psychology, sociology, geography, and anthropology. There may be other disciplines, too, with insights to bring to the research and assessment table. There are exploratory studies, for example, of the biology of learning spaces (e.g., the relationship between space and biomarkers such as eye movement, heart rate, or cortisol levels), the geography of pedagogical space (e.g., mapping classroom engagement with network analysis), and even the art of educational and work spaces.

In addition to these other disciplines, educational developers are also conversant with the perspectives of critical pedagogy, with its emphasis on issues such as diversity, equity, and inclusion, which suggest that we should interrogate the use of space in educational development and challenge the assumptions that underlie the economic and political basis upon which it rests. Looking at CTLs through this lens invites not only questions about who uses CTL space (and who does not) but also larger questions about how space is privileged on a university campus and whether the solution is to create separate spaces, delineated by either role (e.g., faculty) or function (e.g., learning), or to reimagine ways in which spaces can be transformed into collaborative places where such distinctions become increasingly less relevant. While our study suggests that current educational development work is more powerful when coupled with a physical space, it is possible to imagine a future world in which that physical space becomes disconnected from our figurative space, whether our work moves to the cloud and/or becomes ubiquitous across other academic places.

There is so much uncharted territory left to explore. For several questions on the survey, for example, as many as one third of

respondents answered “I don’t know” (drop-down) or “I have no experience with this” (open-ended). One of the pioneers of spatial studies, journalist and activist Jane Jacobs, once remarked that “[o]ld ideas can sometimes use new buildings. New ideas must use old buildings” (Jacobs, 1961, p. 188). As we sit in our old offices, looking out over our historical campuses and contemplating new visions of the possible, it may be worthwhile to point out that there are studies that link space with innovative thinking (Oksanen & Ståhle, 2013). As we continue to ponder the myriad of connections that emerge and evolve between our space and our work, identity, and beliefs as educational developers, we may just find that we have to get out of the box, both literally and figuratively, in order to imagine what we can accomplish in a world where boxes exist not as constraints but as opportunities.

## Biographies

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