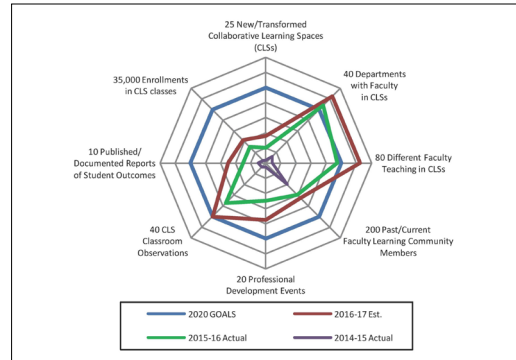


# USING SPACE AS A MECHANISM TO PROMOTE CULTURE CHANGE

University of Arizona

## Key Points:

- To realize an institutional goal for campus-wide adaption of evidence-based approaches to teaching and learning requires both spaces well-designed for collaborative learning and faculty and students well-prepared to make most productive use of such spaces.
- It takes a strong collaboration with facilities management, IT, faculty, and administration; a project manager who has teaching experience; and a committed and vocal administrator within the institution to mobilize attention and action toward well-designed collaborative learning spaces.
- An entrepreneurial spirit is important, along with an opportunity for a core group of faculty to run a pilot for a few weeks by teaching in the space. Before and after surveys of the faculty and students are an important part of the pilot.
- It is a challenge to find large, flat-floor spaces for approaches to large enrollment courses, but engaging a broader community in the search for such spaces becomes an important strategy for change. Having space of various sizes that are distributed across campus enhances the opportunity for culture change.
- Attention to faculty development opportunities, formal and informal, is an essential catalyst if faculty are to have the knowledge and tools necessary for successful implementation of collaborative active learning strategies.



In 2013, the University of Arizona was one of only eight universities awarded a grant from the Association of American Universities for an AAU Undergraduate STEM Education Project. The overarching goal of the project at the University of Arizona was to shift the culture to one that embraces evidence-based, active learning strategies. An important component of the project was to explore the benefits of learning spaces that facilitate collaborative active learning pedagogies.

A 264-student pilot space was built in 4 short months and used for 4 weeks of teaching. The results of the pilot confirmed expectations that faculty and students preferred the space over traditional classrooms. Based on the pilot results, a committee prepared a five-year plan, shown below, to build five new Collaborative Learning Spaces (CLSs) each year.

Three years into the program, more than 150 faculty from sixty departments are teaching in 10 CLSs, accommodating 15,000+ student enrollments per year. Furthermore, UA leadership is committed to ongoing support to develop additional spaces through conversion of existing rooms as well as new construction.

— Gail D. Burd, Ph.D., Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, University of Arizona



"I am trying new things in this room that I have never tried in my 10 years of teaching. The classroom is a 'partner' in the learning process."

— CLS Instructor

