

PROCESS—STRATEGY

WHAT KEEPS YOU UP AT NIGHT WHEN THINKING ABOUT LEARNING SPACES?

To be able to ask a question clearly is two-thirds of the way to getting it answered.
— John Ruskin. 1819 – 1890

The point is to become more adept in inventing an imaginary future...to rethink the assumptions we use to understand the present.
— Riel Miller, Ethos. 2001¹

[Problem-solving] ... is required whenever there is a goal to reach and the attainment of the goal is not possible either by direct action or by retrieving a sequence of previously learned steps from memory. That is, during problem-solving the path to the intended goal is uncertain.
— National Research Council, DBER. 2012^{2,3}

These words of wisdom drove the 2016 – 2017 LSC Roundtables.

These Roundtables began with a prompting question that participants reflected on individually and collectively. They then gathered in small working teams to explore audacious questions to be addressed in the process of inventing and reinventing the future for their students, their institution.

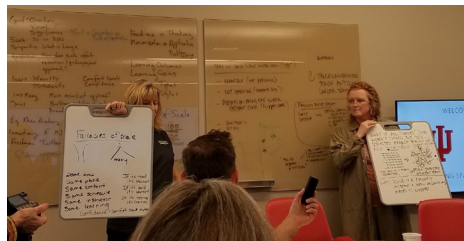
Prompting questions included:

- What keeps you up at night when thinking about learning spaces?
- What do you want your learners to become?
- What is your mental image of the ideal space—classroom, ecosystem for learning?

These prompting questions are woven into the agenda for the 2018 LSC Roundtables.

- Friday night: As introductory “table-talk” conversations
- Saturday morning: Informing discussions about USER
- Saturday afternoon: Developing “take-home” agenda for action.

The Roundtables will be working sessions, modeling “take-home” planning strategies.



¹ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272739756_Futures_Literacy_-_Embracing_Complexity_and_Using_the_Future

² <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/13362/discipline-based-education-research-understanding-and-improving-learning-in-undergraduate>

³ https://www.pkallsc.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/DBER_LSC-onepager.pdf



What keeps you up at night when thinking about learning spaces?

- I think about how to reimagine our library.

I think of a space into which students walk into and immediately understand this is a space in which anything is possible, where there are no bounds to their creativity. They are walking into a space that challenges them to connect in new ways what they are learning in the classroom to the world beyond the classroom.

For me, the essential question is:

How do we create those environments that are highly impactful and define the institution that we are—both for what it is when people come in at the start of their academic career and for the memory they will always have and for how they remember that this is a place that changed their lives?

Our spaces should define what our institution is about.

In thinking about planning learning spaces, particularly the library, we should consider the user from the perspective of who our students are when they come into the space and of what they take away from the space.

We should be thinking about how our spaces change their lives into the future, how memories of spaces become central to their memories of life on our campus.

- I am thinking mostly about classical engineering education vs. active-learning and doing.

This is not only the spaces. It is the things in the spaces. Culture is primary. You have to have a culture and that starts with the faculty because culture is generally set by the faculty. The students today seem to be more interested in actually “doing” than what happens in classical engineering. I think there is too much book learning in engineering (being an industrial engineer). That is my observation.

- As an architect, thinking about how design has changed, even over my short career.

The more that I work on projects in higher education—all shapes and sizes—the more we discover how important it is to be designing spaces that inspire, to be creating spaces that inspire students.

What has been really interesting is how we are learning about how spaces can be transformative, the way that space can really affect how people are using a space, how people begin to develop sense for what a space can be used for.

In terms of a makerspace—in the gambit of the entire learning continuum—what is new is how students are creating their own curriculum and creating their own ways of using the campus.

What keeps you up at night when thinking about learning spaces?

- How do we engage student leaders across campus in planning the programming and preparing students to use these spaces?

How to engage students in helping us understand how to design these spaces for making, how to create programming for these spaces, about actually involving students in educating us about what works for them today, particularly in challenging fields. That is a long response. It is what I think about most of the time.

On my campus, we are seeing a really powerful connection in their burgeoning leadership in their student clubs and all sorts of co-curricular activities. We need to figure out—from the students—not only how to design the spaces but the programming for them.

- Do we have a faculty champion? Do we need one?
- As an architect, my questions are about assessment.

There are so many things we think we know and understand intuitively—and that perhaps have been tested to a certain level in some of our projects—but too often there is no robust follow-up to the question we ask in the planning of projects—we design and plan spaces and they are built and we move forward to the next project. That's the life of an architect—living project-to-project.

We do not often go back and ask questions about how the objectives we established during the process were met—and, perhaps most important, how the spaces are evolving as they are being used—how spaces are responding to changes in the curriculum, in the pedagogies. It is important for architects to develop robust systems of assessment with our clients.

- What keeps me up at night is thinking about how we prepare our students for their future. Then I begin thinking about the role of spaces for learning in making this happen, about how we can give students the opportunity to engage with colleagues in different disciplines, giving them opportunity to engage in spaces that they can design, share ideas in the design and then build.
