Universities are a collection of academic communities creating opportunities for human connection between specialized groups and an incubator for ideas. The campus has traditionally been the container for those communities.

Understanding how the campus plan and the built environment can enhance community is paramount in the post-COVID-19 world. The container is changing to include students and faculty who are teaching or learning remotely.

*Traditional spaces on campus are being re-purposed and re-imagined for new uses never originally intended.*

Studying what creates inclusive and equitable community; going beyond physical location, is critical to getting it right going forward. Community is experienced; one must have a sense of belonging for community to thrive. The question is how to foster community in both physical and remote locations simultaneously so that both groups feel equally included, engaged, and involved.

What creates a sense of community?

How can campuses, buildings, and spaces within, both indoor and outdoor on a campus enhance and promote the communities that share them?

What establishes a virtual community?

How can the physical and virtual communities be melded?
Sense of belonging is created by establishing boundaries either real or imagined. Clear, exacting boundaries result in stronger communities. Layers of communities can exist within a greater community. Interaction between communities creates the magic that births new ideas. With clearly defined boundaries communities thrive in both physical and remote locations. How can spaces act as a container for multiple communities while, at the same time enhancing each individual community experience and creating an inclusive environment? This seems to suggest that buildings and their spaces should be flexible to meet the needs of an array of communities that may use the spaces.

*Thriving communities produce feelings of safety, comfort, and inclusion.*

Spaces, whether physical or virtual should be experienced equitably. Introducing empathy into the process will help to create a climate of inclusion and understanding of the many different perspectives, cultures, abilities, religions, and genders, to name a few, that will make up the community. With the advent of remote learning during the pandemic and the lessons learned from that experience we will need to design from both the perspective of the user of physical space and the remote learner going forward.

What does the remote learner need to maintain the same feeling of inclusion and engagement as the learner in physical space?

How can the experience between the two become seamless?

How does pedagogy, both in the physical environment and the remote platform need to adapt to make this possible?
Symbols are the unspoken system we use to communicate deeper meaning. Common symbol systems combined with rituals give communities richness and depth. Symbols can be visual, a language system, implied, or imagined. They resonate in us and bring a vitality of their own. Common vocabulary and vernacular are employed to convey meaning and intent. Biophilia, light, color, texture, sound, and images can all be employed as symbols. How can space be used to reinforce symbols and rituals while maintaining inclusivity across groups?

Communities share common goals and experiences that form and build the group culture.

The remote learner misses out on the all-important social-emotional learning that happens on a campus.

How can that social-emotional learning be captured for the remote learner?

How is remote learning reframing culture?

How are group goals being realigned? What affect does this realignment have on physical spaces, non-traditional spaces, re-imagined space?

There has been a trend towards combining different learning communities within a building.

Does the data show that communities are stronger together?

Personal investment, getting students to become active in the community, solidifies the group. Finding ways to keep students engaged and active while remote is key to the continued success of the group. The gaming industry has been very successful at engagement and connection.

Can education be informed by the successes of the gaming industry?

Technology will play a vital role. Infrastructure is critical to supporting technology and the advances that will be coming. Designing forward, striving to accommodate what will be is critical for future adaptation. Buildings must be flexible, able to morph and change to new realities.
Human connections exist through learning, exchange of ideas, and research. Not everyone experiences these connections the same way. Race, gender, religion, sexual preference, ability, culture can create a different lens by which spaces are experienced. These different lenses need to be considered and understood when spaces are being designed. Spaces must be inclusive, but they also must be equitable. Designers must be empathic in their process to create spaces that engage and inspire all.

Campuses exist to create an incubator for ideas.

Students will thrive when they feel included, engaged, and empowered to be active participants. Their communities need to be strong enough that they can be vulnerable enough to fail. Buildings and spaces, both on campus and virtual need to be a strong container for the communities. Buildings and spaces should reinforce the culture, inspire collaboration, build connections, push the boundaries and be forward looking. Buildings and spaces need to be flexible, agile, and resourceful in order to meet the ever-changing needs and conditions that we will face in the future.
KEY POINTS

• Traditional spaces on campus are being re-purposed and re-imagined for new uses never originally intended.

• Thriving communities produce feelings of safety, comfort, and inclusion.

• Campuses exist to bring communities together - Designers must be empathic in their process to create spaces that engage and inspire all.

• Campuses exist to create an incubator for ideas - Buildings and spaces need to be flexible, agile, and resourceful in order to meet the ever-changing needs and conditions that we will face in the future.