Design for the New Technology Climate

*What lessons learned, pre-COVID and in the technological response to the pandemic, might inform **what's next?***

The global pandemic hurled us into emergency response learning. With this sudden shift, the role of technology also elevated. Moving beyond the prior engineering or "FF&E" approach to technology (e.g. projectors and Wi-Fi), **future success lies in recognizing technology as a platform to connect learners with digital collaboration skills** at a new scale.

Many institutions discovered **new opportunities and approaches to scholarship**, and new opportunities to **learn or teach anywhere, anytime**. We all also acknowledge the things we miss, particularly the **sense of community and personal connection.**

This emergent moment, as higher-education discovers **the next "new normal"**, offers an opportunity to come together as educators, architects, and technologists **to capture the best advantages from both the digital and physical aspects of the human experience.**

New Design Tools for the Technology Frontier

Usciences IPEX

At the Usciences' Integrated Professional Education Complex (IPEX), leadership, curriculum developers, degree accreditation, architects, and academic technologists collaborated on an innovative learning experience, preparing cross-trained teams for the future of healthcare. Storyboarding concepts defined how users could move quickly between supportive team-based classroom learning and the simulated high-stakes application of skills in a variety of healthcare environments (complete with simulated patients and background noise). The physical experience was enhanced digitally, tracking progress on and recordings of past scenarios. Extending beyond the design of a learning space, this radical evolution required the team to first define the learning outcomes and leverage new methodologies to capture the digital and physical experience together.

The Window Between the Physical and Digital Classroom

The mass adoption of remote learning during the pandemic helped reframe what a learning environment can be. The emerging hybrid or "HyFlex" classroom trend delivers learning over several modalities (through recordings, face-to-face, remote learning, and asynchronous activities). Spaces dedicated for this use often look like a hybrid of an active classroom and a media studio, with an array of cameras, screens, and interactive technologies to foster an equitable experience for learners physically present in the classroom and those connecting remotely.

Boston University Questrom School of Management Hybrid Learning Studio

Places to Experiment with Emerging Digital Skills

"State of the Art" is no longer something you build, it's a process of perpetual innovation.
The Jones Media Center includes spaces for students and faculty to push the boundaries of new technologies, constantly changing the space and how it's used. The sandbox space provides a high degree of flexibility and connectivity, including a mesh of network enabled sensors, mounting points for rapid testing (installation/demounting) of new technologies, and easily accessible pathways for wire in the ceiling, floors, and walls.

Dartmouth Jones Media Center
Photo: Horne Visual Media