

“Designing for Learning: Creating Campus Environments for Student Success” - Camey Strange, James H. Banning

Strange, Charles Carney, and James H. Banning. *Designing for Learning: Creating Campus Environments for Student Success*. Jossey-Bass a Wiley Brand, 2015.

Designing Campus Environments that Foster Student Learning and Success

The authors defined learning as being a multidimensional experiences that involves a multitude of intelligences as well as wide ranges of styles and preferences. L. Dee Fink was cited in this article through his identifications and definitions of six different kinds of significant learning:

1. Foundational Knowledge
 - a. Understanding and remembering the key concepts, principles, relationships, and facts = the course content
2. Application
 - a. The ability to engage in critical and creative thinking, problem solving, and decision making as well as learning to manage complex projects
3. Integration
 - a. Identifying similarities and making connections among realms of knowledge
4. Human Dimension
 - a. Interaction with the self and others in new and improved ways as well as understanding the implications of them
5. Caring
 - a. Changing one's interests, feelings, or values
6. Learning How to Learn
 - a. Acquiring better educational skills, and learning how to construct knowledge on a specific subject

It is mentioned in this section that when students participate in a higher level of learning, that they will have an enhancement in their individual lives plus their social interactions. This connected learning will also provide the students with the skills to be more informed and thoughtful citizens. They discuss that the goal of learning is the, “merging of personal identity, values, beliefs, knowledge, skills, and interests toward a purposeful endpoint of fulfillment and human actualization.”

A Hierarchy of Environmental Design

Defined as: “the need for environments that promote inclusion and safety precede the need for environments that encourage engagement and community.”

This definition in mind, it is important to note that an educational institution must have an inclusive, safe, and secure environment for all students as the first necessity of presentation.

Promotion Inclusion and Safety

One of the opening statements of this section claims that if there is a failure to attend to one, inclusion and safety, that it will jeopardize the other.

Designing Environments for Inclusion

For those students who do not feel as though they are included and who also are forced to face certain levels of risk, have a tendency to “check-out” psychologically which could also lead to them doing so physically. This means that these students are more likely to leave the institution. The influencing factors to these decisions are in relation to the physical design of the campus, organizational aspects, and artifacts of campus culture.

- Physical Factors
 - Various designs have differential effects on the experiences of the students who encounter these spaces as well as their opportunities for learning, growth, and development.
 - Any design that isolates students or distances them from one another is less effective in sustaining a learning community.
 - High densities of students leads to behaviors less likely to promote inclusion or build community.
 - There is a need for fundamental access to campus, the facilities, and opportunities otherwise the sense of inclusion is jeopardized.
 - Dominant campus features often reflect the influence of dominant groups.
- Organizational Factors
 - The size of the space influences the different experiences that students from different background may have.
 - Inclusion is strengthened by personalized and affirming encounters.
- Socially Constructed Factors
 - Hostility is destructive to all groups and diminished the ability of the campus to foster learning and development.
 - Inclusive attitudes entail a positive sense of mattering and validation (especially for those in out-groups)
 - Mattering includes five aspects:
 - Importance: feeling important
 - Attention: feeling noticed
 - Ego Extension: feeling empathy for others
 - Dependence: being needed
 - Appreciation: feeling appreciated by other

- Symbols of campus culture serve to wall in some students as well as wall out others

Designing for Safety and Security

- Physical Factors
 - Macro-Level: regional location
 - Reducing the height or increasing permeability of visual barriers and eliminating or opening up alcoves or other confining areas.
 - Micro-Level: placements of buildings
- Organizational Factors
 - Environments of a more human scale may hold claim on individuals in a more personalized way and promote a greater sense of belonging.
- Constructed Factors
 - The cumulative effects of person-environment incompatibility associated with physical, aggregate, and organizational features of an environment which makes some individuals out to be outsiders.
 - Learning is a social activity and decisions about about campus design must include strategies that promote a wide embrace of students and their connection to one another.

Principles of Universal Design

Defined as: “concept of designing all products and the built environment to be aesthetic and usable to the greatest extent possible by everyone, regardless of their age, ability, or status in life.”

1. Principle 1: Equitable Use
 - a. The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.
2. Principle 2: Flexibility in Use
 - a. The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities
3. Principle 3: Simple and Intuitive Use
 - a. Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the users’ experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.
4. Principle 4: Perceptible Information
 - a. The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user’s sensory abilities.
5. Principle 5: Tolerance for Error
 - a. The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
6. Principle 6: Low Physical Effort
 - a. The design can be used efficiently and comfortably with a minimum of fatigue.

7. Principle 7: Size and Space for Approach and Use

- a. Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation and use regardless of user's body, size, posture, or mobility.

Three additional provisions can be added to enhance these seven principles:

1. Multiple Means of Representation (the "what" of learning)
 - a. Recognizes that students vary in the "ways they perceive and comprehend information."
2. Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression (the "how" of learning)
 - a. Emphasizes that learners "differ in the ways that they can navigate a learning environment and express what they know."
3. Provide Multiple Means of Engagement (the "why" of learning)
 - a. Emphasizes the significance of learner affect in the success of the learning process.
 - b. Some students are highly engaged by spontaneity and novelty, while others are disengaged by those aspects.

Safe and Brave Spaces

Refraining from traditional safe space ground rules may encourage deeper participation of all, conflict and civility will pair up to lead to further clarifications and understanding of others.

Successful Communities

Successful communities can be assessed using three criteria:

1. Commitment to the Community
 - a. Genuine commitment is instrumental, affective, and moral.
 - b. The commitment's manifestations are high retention, cohesiveness, and an acceptance of social control.
2. A Sense of Empowerment
 - a. Influence members to act, in effect, to move beyond a sense of security and belonging to become actively engaged.
3. A Sense That One Matters to Others Within the Community
 - a. Apparent when members move from a marginal state to a feeling that others depend on them, are interested in them, are concerned about their fate, and share pride or empathy for their successes or failure.

Dimensions of Community

Community is dependent on various natural and synthetic physical features of their location, the specific characteristics of the members, the organization of community relationships and tasks, and the tactic qualities of the dominant culture. Strong communities hold a sense of synergy as physical features, "define spaces where members pursue common purposes over time in ways that are sustained by their shared characteristics and compatible with their unique collective qualities."

Communities tend to be territorial because they require a space in which to exist and carry out their functions while they are creating a sense of home and a space where artifacts are maintained. Levy is cited in this section through the use of the identification of features to consider when designing students spaces:

- Grand, inviting interior spaces
 - Balconies and stairways
- Well-developed transparency mix
 - Use of glass to separate large spaces
- Action/activity
 - Areas for activity
- Light and sound
 - Mix of low light and bright spaces
- A sense of student
 - Art, furniture, and facility components
- Flexible, technical spaces
 - Lounge and common space
- A sense of spontaneous connectedness and comfort

On the organizational level, these spaces must be structured to offer some kind of stability for student involvement while also being flexible to respond and adapt to changing social circumstances. A certain degree of formalization, stratification, and routine is required to achieve this level of organization. Strong communities are often recognizable by their “distinctive, well-defined presses, climates, and cultures-” one where the people are deeply involved with one another.

To conclude this section the authors are quoted, “communities seem to thrive when:

- Space is available for a group of individuals who share characteristics and interests
- When organizational designs invite participation and decision making
- When artifacts of culture express and support a common vision and purpose”

Challenges of Building Community

Characteristics that contribute to strong subcommunities are what most often distracts from the community as a whole; similarly, what seems to sustain a community as a whole also usually comes at the expense of subcommunities.

We can use four criteria for building authentic campus communities:

1. Involvement: this environment holds a high degree of interaction with students assuming a multitude of roles.
 - a. Supportive interactions with students helping one another
2. Influence: control is held by members where students display maximum control over their physical and social environment

- a. Students feel important, valued, and feel as though their contributions are essential to the betterment of the group
3. Investment: a reflection of psychological ownership.
 - a. Flows naturally from involvement and influence
4. Identity: focus on commonalities and transcendent values

The communities that are characterized by these four criteria provide easy access and control of group space while supporting ongoing interaction and stability. These communities exhibit a clear set of values and normative expectations. It was said that the community should have the following characteristics: “regular interactions between students as a foundation for ongoing relationships, opportunities for collaboration, being small enough so that no one feels superfluous, inclusion, and service as a reference group so there are no boundaries of the “in” and “out” groups.”

Learning communities should be designed to do:

- Develop a sense of group identity
- Provide facilities which people can come together
- Create a supportive environment that engages students
- Develop seamless student experience integrating both social and academics
- Develop connections among disciplines
- Provide context for developing complex thinking skills
- Continually evaluating the process and the outcomes

The goal of community building is so that students can recognize a high-quality sense of belonging.

Toward an Ecology of Learning

Campus environments set conditions that affect student learning which means that students also influence and shape the environment.

- Campus Ecology Model: relationship between student and campus is transactional.
 - Begins with the assumption that students and campus are mutually shaping forces in the complex balance of institutional design.
 - Eight themes:
 - Campus consists of stimuli that influence a student’s sensory modalities
 - Transactional relationship
 - Students are viewed as active agents
 - Every student possesses the capacity for a wide variety of possible behaviors
 - Students will attempt to cope with any educational environment
 - A wide variety of campus subenvironments
 - Every campus has a design

- Successful designs depend on input from all campus members

One of the key elements to consider is that a campus environment has an effect on people whether we want it to or not. We must strive to create conditions that encourage behaviors that are consistent with the mission and support education. Assessment and identification of environmental components, their impacts, and their purposes are important first-step considerations in the design process.

A Personal Ecology of Student Development

The assessment of campus environments can be also understood from the perspective of the students and other individuals using the spaces. Different settings may allow for the individual to express certain interests and skills that may not be appreciated in other settings.

- Differential Interactionist Perspective
 - Suggests that the particular combination of settings for one student will likely have an effect that differs from that of another student