

# **Newell Hall Student Steering Committee Proposal**

Committee Chairs:

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## **Background:**

Since 2009 students at the University of Florida have consistently requested additional study space on campus. In fact, 16-17% of students who responded to the 2009, 2011, and 2013 SERU survey stated that an inadequate study environment served as an obstacle to their academic success. To alleviate this, Student Government helped obtain \$10M in funding from the State Legislature through successful lobbying initiatives this past spring and summer to transform Newell Hall into a much needed, innovative learning space that will enhance the student experience for each Gator. This proposal is the result of the Student Steering Committee charged by Student Body President Cory Yeffet. The Committee, chaired by External Affairs Chairman Blake Murphy and Senate President Pro-Tempore Joseph Michaels, was tasked with researching and compiling input from industry experts and students. The following is an outline of the Student Steering Committee's findings as it relates to a creative, unique learning space, not offered anywhere else on campus at the University of Florida.

For two weeks the Committee analyzed hundreds of pages of academia, much of which was found at <http://360.steelcase.com/white-papers/> and other online sources, to gain a better understanding of what experts claim is needed to ensure this space is successful. Upon conducting this research, the Committee determined three central themes necessary to foster the creative, unique learning environment that Newell Hall will embody. These themes should be prevalent in each of the spaces created including Collaborative Space, Socialization Space, and Focus Space.

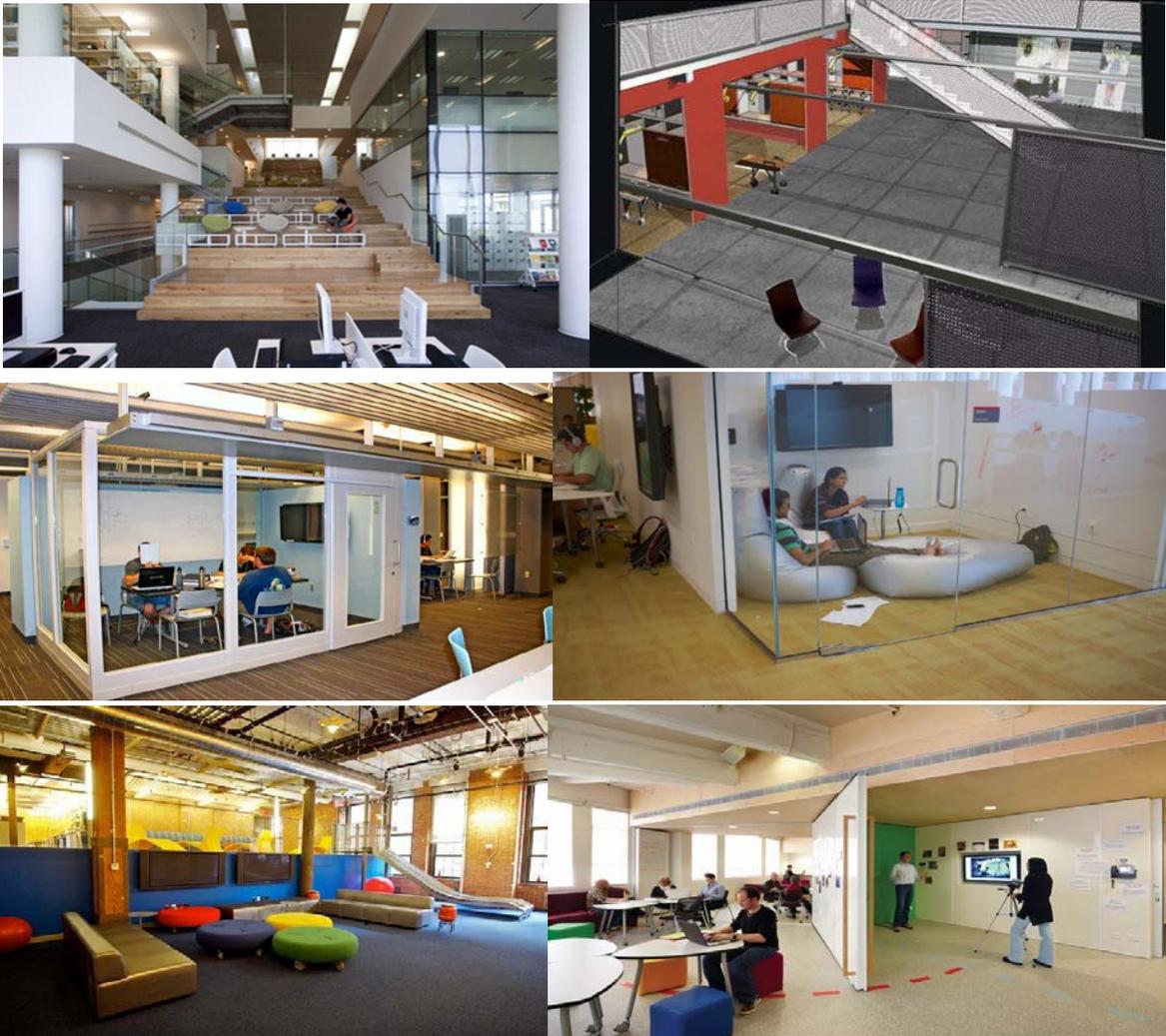
## **Themes:**

1. **Innovation:** Newell Hall should provide students with the most modern technology, but more importantly, equal access to that technology. Studies find that more than 80% of students believe that technology improves their learning experience. Our goal is to make Newell Hall one of the most state of the art learning spaces in the country while continuing to use student input to determine what resources should be included. Our goal is to stray away from the classroom or library feel to strive more toward a newsroom, lounge or cafe.
2. **Flexibility:** Newell Hall should incorporate variability and configurability, and provide for customization. Our research shows that students are among the most versatile learners. Therefore, to ensure that each student is able to optimize his or her personalized learning experience, the space ought to provide for a variety of options.
3. **Accessibility:** Newell Hall should be an open, inclusive environment. Students need to feel comfortable in this space to stimulate interaction. This includes inviting learning spaces that promote collaboration.

## Distribution of Space:

### 1. Collaborative Learning Space

The Committee's first priority for the distribution of this space is understandably collaborative learning space. It is important that this is a "we space" not an "I space." However, it is important to note that the optimal learning group is four to eight students. The collaborative learning space should foster human connectedness and interaction. Studies find that accessible areas with informal boundaries stimulate collaborative learning. Therefore, walls are not necessary. Low walls, transparent glass walls, or completely movable walls, with vertical display boards can accomplish this goal. Moreover, the mobility of furniture in the collaborative learning spaces are essential. By including furniture that is not only mobile but customizable, students can create a personalized learning space for their group. Students should have a menu of options in this collaborative space that veers from the traditional "desk-and-chair" model to provide for a personalized, collaborative learning experience. Student should have the opportunity to practice presentations and collaborate with students to enhance their academic performance. This space should foster student cooperation to promote problem solving and success at the University of Florida.



## 2. Socialization Space

Socialization space should be central to Newell Hall and should contribute to the overall atmosphere of the building. In contrast to other study spaces around campus, Newell Hall should be a place where students should feel comfortable to talk, work together and communicate. By ensuring this space is in the core of the building, students in other areas will still feel at ease speaking up and reaching out. The space should accommodate casual interactions to foster peer tutoring and networking. Healthy and energizing food and beverage service is also essential to this area. Moreover, activities like ping pong, pool, wii and interactive games that project onto walls and floors should be in the space and will provide needed study breaks for students utilizing Newell Hall. Studies have also found that artwork displayed throughout the space will foster creativity and prevent a harsh learning atmosphere. Lastly, keeping the space open and free of walls and obstructions will make sure students in other areas will feel welcome to take a break while students socializing remember to stay on task. Newell Hall should be branded as as socialization space to ensure the collaborative culture is embedded into the area.



### 3. Focusing Space

Newell Hall will be collaborative in nature. However, it is important that students have the opportunity to learn independently. This space must include variability and have a palette of place, presence, and posture options. Students should have a variety of sitting, standing, and walking options and furniture should not be static. Furniture in these areas should reflect the shift to smaller technology devices, including wider arm rests, a reclining option, and soft edge tables. Hoteling, or the ability to reserve rooms, should be allowed. Though these rooms should provide for focused group learning. Cubicles should be avoided, and focus space with vertical displays and storage options are encouraged. The workspace in the focus spaces should include table room for active, anticipated, and archived work to provide more focused learners with the ability to organize tasks on the workbench and a sense of ownership for the space when using it.

