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- Students want to do more than simply listen.



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Higher Education: 10 Strategies for the Next Generation Campus

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Today, colleges and universities are finding themselves trapped between a rock and a hard place. Students applying for admission have high expectations for quality student housing, first class amenities in campus facilities, and connectivity and collaboration within the classrooms. At the same time, the businesses looking to hire a school's graduates expect real-world experience, critical thinking abilities, and soft skills training. Higher education decision makers must work harder than ever to position themselves as the "school of choice" for both top students and hiring managers. Design firms, as partners to the college and university community, must play a key role in assisting these institutions in creating thriving campuses, which support the next generation. Here are ten strategies we, as design professionals, can deploy to play our part:



1. 24/7 Lifestyle: Set schedules and "normal" school hours are a thing of the past. Students today expect a campus to provide them with a full community experience. Learning spaces must provide places for informal gathering and socialization. The availability of food is essential in all buildings, even in our libraries and classroom buildings, as students will not gather otherwise. Health and fitness facilities should be provided to

help promote wellness amongst the student body.

2. Experiential Learning: Students have transitioned from being "content consumers" to "content creators." The new learning facilities we design must support the faculty's desire to be facilitators of a highly engaged, team-based classroom experience. Technology must support a blended approach that couples online research with localized activities. Students can learn as much from each other, as they can from instructors, if we provide the space for them to interact.

3. Unique Amenities: Technology and wireless networking are no longer amenities, they are expectations. Today's students desire places to relax their minds. Consider designing spaces ideal for listening and playing music. Include gaming spaces and photography studios. Another current trend is specific Co-op spaces that support development of real-world experience and potential employer-employee interactions.

4. "Maker" Opportunities: Students want to do more than simply listen. They want to create. Provide spaces, with the necessary tools, to turn their ideas into action. 3D printing, laser cutting, and wood and metal shops, should be available for students to get hands-on experience.





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5. Community: For many students, this is the first time away from home. The experience can seem overwhelming. As designers, we can ease students' anxieties by creating a sense of community. Large facilities that use colors and signage to break themselves up into smaller "neighborhoods" are much easier to navigate. Providing spaces for socialization as well as private time allows students to respond to their moods and emotions. Infusing sustainability, flexibility and technology into the facilities speaks to the values of the next generation.

6. Collisions: We must remember to create "magnet" amenity and social spaces to draw students to common locations. Configure these spaces to interconnect through open stairways and corridors for full visibility and spontaneous interaction. We know that ideas, innovation and enthusiasm originate from the interaction of people, often unplanned interactions. Make this a part of the higher education environment.

The higher education facilities we design must serve to educate our students. They also need to contribute in the recruiting of top students and faculty, the development of students into great people, and the transition of graduates into the workforce. Design professionals can be a critical part of this process, if we partner with the college and university community and seize the design opportunities at our fingertips.

