



Forum

Designing Buildings for Today's University

September 26, 2006

Executive Summary

WISCAPE hosted *Designing Buildings for Today's University* on September 26, 2006 in Grainger Hall on the University of Wisconsin–Madison campus. Jeff Stebar and Jeff Ziebarth, principal architects at Perkins + Will, were the keynote speakers for this event. Nationally recognized for their work and expertise in both academic building design and the planning of student life facilities, Stebar and Ziebarth addressed the challenges and opportunities of designing buildings that meet the diverse and changing needs of campus communities. They described many of the social conditions that are central to the work of planning effective university facilities, such as:

- Changes in student demographics;
- The influences of globalization; and
- Rapid advances in information technology.

Commentators from UW–Madison included Alan Fish, associate vice chancellor for Facilities, Planning, and Management, and Daniel Okoli, campus architect, who both served as respondents, and Kenneth Frazier, interim CIO and director of the General Library System, who moderated the session. A lively question and discussion session followed Stebar's and Ziebarth's remarks. The audience consisted of a wide variety of representatives from throughout the university community, including students, faculty, administrators, campus design professionals, and building committee members.

Throughout their talk, Stebar and Ziebarth emphasized the particular challenges of planning buildings for students and faculty who are technologically savvy and who work in increasingly collaborative, rather than isolated, intellectual environments. They explained that advances in information technology have resulted in the separation of knowledge from institutions. Rather than remaining tied to particular universities, knowledge can now be accessed and shared from anywhere in the world. This makes it easier than ever before for students and faculty to collaborate with colleagues in different

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CF020: *Designing Buildings for Today's University*

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departments and institutions. It also opens new ways of teaching and learning, as curricula become more cooperative and learner directed.

According to Stebar and Ziebarth, higher education design professionals are increasingly designing facilities that incorporate different programs and activities into a single building in an effort to enable technologically-advanced and collaborative work. Research facilities that house several different departments, residence halls housing classrooms, and academic buildings with flexible learning spaces rather than large lecture halls are becoming more common on university campuses. These “hybrid buildings” help build and support community in an increasingly online world.

Though their talk often described the rapidly changing world of higher education building design, Stebar and Ziebarth also emphasized that certain elements of university life will remain the same. They emphasized the continued need for welcoming and comfortable buildings that make a university campus a “home away from home” for those who study and work within its boundaries. Although research, learning, and social exchanges increasingly occur online, physical buildings remain the location of the formal and informal interactions central to university life.

Fish and Okoli highlighted the ways in which UW–Madison building initiatives coincided with many of the higher education building design trends that Stebar and Ziebarth described. Okoli reasserted the continued importance of physical buildings, even in a technological age. He emphasized their critical role as learning environments and their centrality in creating and sustaining a welcoming and productive campus climate. Fish focused his remarks on UW–Madison’s continued leadership in innovative building design, citing campus facilities such as the Wisconsin Institute for Discovery and Newell J. Smith Hall that encourage collaboration and support community development.

Related Web Links

Perkins + Will

<http://www.perkinswill.com/>

University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Facilities, Planning, and Management

<http://www2.fpm.wisc.edu/fpm/>

Jeff Stebar’s and Jeff Ziebarth’s PowerPoint presentation is available online at:

<http://www.wiscapewisc.edu/calendar/details.asp?id=430>.

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Agenda

Public Lecture

Designing Buildings for Today's University

Noon – 2:00 p.m.

Room 4151 Grainger Hall

Introduction

Noel Radomski
Managing Director, WISCAPE

Moderator

Ken Frazier
Interim Chief Information Officer and Library Director, University of Wisconsin–
Madison

Speakers

Jeff Stebar
Principal Architect (Building Design and Student Life)
Perkins + Will

Jeff Ziebarth
Principal Architect (Building Design and Academics / Learning)
Perkins + Will

Respondents

Alan Fish, Associate Vice Chancellor
Facilities, Planning, and Management
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Daniel Okoli
Campus Architect, Director of Major Projects
Facilities, Planning, and Management
University of Wisconsin-Madison

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