

Utah State University College of Engineering

Education/Learning; Logan, Utah

Workplace Issues:

- Flexibility/Ease of Change
- Strategy Alignment
- Image/Branding

Application:

- Entire Facility
- Study Carrel
- Public Space/Lobby
- Private Office

Project Scope: Four floors of classrooms, lounges, offices

Products:

- Action Office System
- Ethospace System
- Passage Desking System
- Resolve System
- Casework
- Co/Struc System
- Aeron Chairs
- Aside Chairs
- Geiger Seating
- Equa 2 Chairs
- Caper Chairs
- Mirra Chairs
- CLT Tables
- Eames Tables
- Meridian Pedestals
- Meridian Stackable Lateral Files
- Meridian Stackable Storage Cabinets
- Meridian Storage Cases and Bookcases
- Meridian Storage Towers

Year completed: 2003



Question:

What is a storage room when it isn't a storage room anymore?

Answer:

A classroom, a faculty office, a lounge area.

Churn and change are inevitable in college facilities, and Tom Graham, architectural project coordinator with Utah State University, believed that adaptability of furniture was key in outfitting the new facility within the College of Engineering. Graham was also a proponent of Herman Miller products and believed that they could be used throughout the facility, from engineering labs to storage rooms to the department head's office.

"It wasn't a difficult decision," says Graham. "Engineering changes frequently, and we didn't want anything that was nailed down and built in." This has already proven to be a wise decision. Lab spaces, for example, configured with Meridian storage cabinets and laminate tops and Co/Struc process tables, were recently reconfigured—without tearing out or purchasing new furniture.

Construction of the new facility began with the state of Utah's desire to attract more high-tech businesses. Building a stronger technology focus in state universities to increase interest in the study and teaching of engineering and other technology fields was a first step. To start, the state dedicated funds to upgrade facilities and programs as a means to recruit top-notch engineering faculty and attract prospective students.

In making the furniture decisions, Graham and Paige Wright, vice president of business development at Henriksen/Butler in Salt Lake City, knew they could communicate a forward-thinking image through a departure from traditional institutional-type furnishings and applications. Herman Miller products would not only facilitate future change, they would also communicate a future-oriented attitude, one that embraced new technologies and ideas—all-important in attracting and retaining faculty and students.





The new building gives students, faculty, and employees a lively and refreshed environment in which to work, teach, and learn.

The third floor includes a student services and lounge area. The lounge includes tables and Caper chairs for group work or visiting and about 20 Resolve workstations with Mirra chairs for private, quiet study. "Students love this space," says Graham. "It's colorful, light, and open. It looks out over mountains and the canyon. It's a beautiful and pleasant space for students to work in."

This floor demonstrates the benefit of adaptability. Initially, the lounge area included soft seating. But students tended to gravitate to tables to work together and spread out papers and books. The solution? Move the soft seating to create a lounge outside the faculty offices and move more tables and chairs into the student area. Wright and Graham were able to accommodate two different needs by swapping existing products.



Also on the third floor is a computer lab created with Action Office Series 2 product. A lower-height panel defines privacy but also provides a visual break: "Nice," says Graham, "when you have that many individual study areas."

The first floor holds large lecture areas, furnished with fixed lecture tables (the only built-in product in the facility) and Caper chairs. The second floor houses smaller classrooms. The tables and chairs in this area can be reconfigured for seminar arrangements or small group work. The large labs are outfitted with Meridian and Co/Struc product.

Other applications within the building include small graduate student offices with Action Office Series 2, dean and faculty offices with Passage wood and laminate, dean's conference room with a Geiger table, leather Equa chairs and Geiger Quiver side chairs, counseling offices with Ethospace, and storage and equipment rooms with Meridian storage and Action Office Series 2—all created with Herman Miller products that will be ready to adapt to whatever future need arises.



And how has the building, open just over one year, achieved the goals of image and adaptability? This new building has made a significant improvement to the school, according to Graham. "We've done well in attracting faculty and students to our engineering program. And the model of flexibility and modularity will be used in other buildings to come."