



## University of Florida Gainesville, Florida, U.S.A.



**Hundreds of colleges across the country are experimenting with a classroom model called SCALE-UP, which encourages teachers to roam and students to collaborate. Working with Herman Miller's Learning Spaces Research Program<sup>SM</sup>, the University of Florida is taking the model a step further, modifying the SCALE-UP approach to give remote students a way to collaborate with their peers in the classroom.**

Surrounded by classrooms designed for students who sit in rows and take notes—pretty much the way it's been for generations—Dr. Tawnya Means, director of the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment at the University of Florida's Warrington College of Business Administration, wondered if it might be time to try something different.

Her curiosity was prompted mostly by a campus-wide conviction that such passive learning isn't always the best way to connect with today's students.

Another question was also in play: At the University of Florida, many students learn online—an even more passive experience than the old-school lecture hall. Could a classroom be designed to engage remote students who never even step inside it?

## Case Study

“A number of universities are exploring active learning that encourages more student involvement,” says Dr. Means. “We wanted to go further and see if there was a way to help remote students participate actively, too.”

### Scale-Up

Intrigued by Herman Miller’s insights into the future of education, the University of Florida sought the company’s insight as they designed an experimental classroom to better engage students both present and virtual.

Over the past few years, Herman Miller has helped dozens of universities test new teaching methods through its Learning Spaces Research Program. Universities participating in the program work with Herman Miller to develop learning studios that serve as labs for trying out promising ideas before implementing them in a broader context.

“Once we heard about Herman Miller’s research into learning space design, we knew we had found a partner,” says Dr. Means. “We were in the early planning stages for a new business building and thought this would help us make some decisions about how it should take shape.”

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– Dr. Tawnya Means

The University of Florida explored the SCALE-UP movement and knew it wanted to try a variation on its Gainesville campus. Pioneered at North Carolina State, SCALE-UP, which stands for Student-Centered Active Learning Environment for Undergraduate Programs, has been adopted in some capacity by well over a hundred universities across North America.

Though the particulars vary, the SCALE-UP approach places instructors in the middle of a room and surrounds them with small teams of students at round tables. Students typically share monitors that facilitate all types of interaction—between teacher and students and among students themselves.



Now in place on hundreds of campuses, the SCALEUP model dispenses with row upon row of desks.

## Case Study



Lightweight Caper® chairs, a popular choice on college campuses, work well in the informal SCALE-UP environment.

This setup minimizes the passive learning that takes place in conventional classrooms by encouraging instructors to roam and students to work together. A body of research suggests that SCALE-UP helps students develop the collaboration skills employers value. Moreover, the learning experience tends to be unusually dynamic. Students know they can't just sit back and listen but must come to class prepared to participate.

“The Active Learning Studio breaks down walls by allowing remote students to collaborate with their on-campus peers in real-time.”

– Tom Wilkinson

### Active Learning Studio

Herman Miller worked with the University of Florida to fine-tune and furnish its Active Learning Studio—the school's name for its SCALE-UP space. Like most SCALE-UP projects, the room consists of round student tables surrounding a teacher's station in the middle.



Rather than lecturing from the front of the classroom, instructors roam about to interact with students.

In this case, the round tables accommodate up to eight students each sitting in lightweight, mobile Caper chairs. Instructors use a height-adjustable Everywhere™ Table that allows them to either sit or stand—for a healthier balance between the two—when not moving around the classroom.

Another Everywhere Table is reserved for a specialist charged with troubleshooting the technology that allows everyone to share content back and forth—including remote students who log in to the Active Learning Studio. Most remote students are pursuing online degrees, though some might be studying abroad or are temporarily out of town.

Here's an example of how the set-up might work: Let's say a programming class is in session, and everyone is working on the same problem. While roaming the classroom to offer assistance, the instructor spots a particularly adept solution on one team's monitor and instantly shares it with every other team—including those team members who aren't on site.

“The Active Learning Studio has chairs for 32 students but could conceivably serve many more,” says Tom Wilkinson, the Herman Miller higher education account manager who works with the University of Florida. “It breaks down walls by allowing remote students to collaborate with their on-campus peers in real-time.”

“SCALE-UP doesn't dismiss the role of traditional lectures, but there's no question it equips students to work more effectively in groups,” says Derrell Jackson, who manages Herman Miller's Learning Spaces Research Program. “At the University of Florida, that's true no matter how far-flung those groups might be.”

## Case Study

The team dynamic at the core of the SCALE-UP concept helps students develop the collaboration skills employers value.



### Heavener Hall

When Heavener Hall, the University of Florida's new business building, opens, it's expected to borrow heavily from core SCALE-UP concepts.

Plans call for only two classrooms to be set up as traditional lecture halls. All others will be designed to encourage greater student participation. The collaborative lessons learned in the Active Learning Studio will be evident throughout all of the spaces, which will be outfitted with Herman Miller furniture.

"We can get tables and chairs from anywhere," says Dr. Means. "Herman Miller brings us greater depth in their approach to higher education. Their assistance with our Active Learning Studio has helped us start conversations about teaching and learning that we simply hadn't been having before."

**Industry**  
Education

**Topics**  
Collaboration  
Engagement

**Application**  
Learning Spaces

**Project Scope**  
900 square feet

**Herman Miller Products**  
Caper Stacking Chair  
Everywhere Tables

**Program/Service**  
Learning Spaces  
Research Program

**Year Completed**  
2012

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