

Changing Course.

CONNECTING CAMPUS DESIGN
TO A NEW KIND OF STUDENT





We've all heard about the new student arriving on college campuses.

These millennials, postmillennials and digital natives grew up with the social technologies to which older generations are still adapting. Many walk to class wearing headphones, surfing the web on a smart phone and responding to text messages. Interaction occurs as much via email, social networks and instant messaging as it does in person. According to Gensler's new research, despite all of this connectivity, independence and study-alone time are the factors that define today's student experience.

New models of education are arriving as well.

Top-tier universities are putting class materials online using free, open-source platforms. Libraries are also in flux, as reading and research move from the physical to the virtual catalogue. Teachers and administrators are acknowledging the need for new teaching and learning models that match these evolving realities. Yet campus design has not kept up with these pedagogical aspirations.

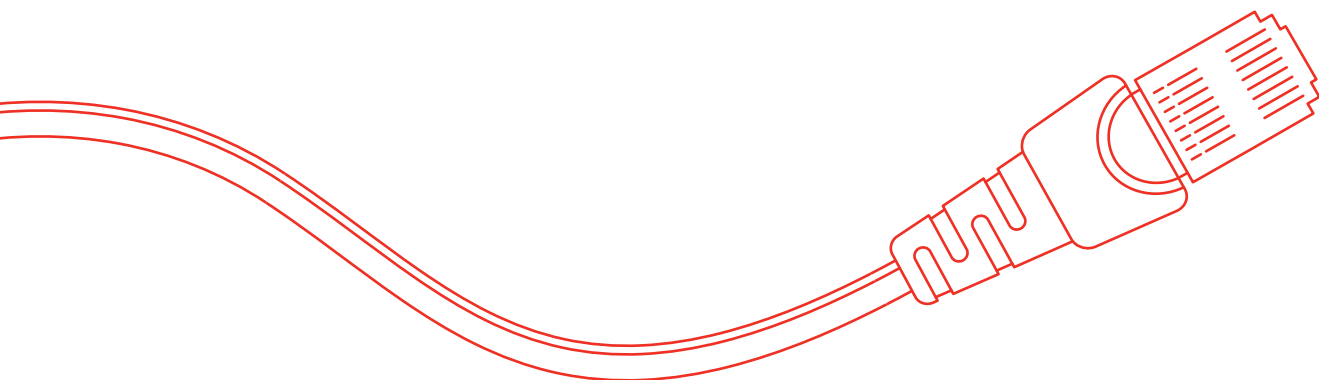
The integration of the virtual seems to pair with a renewed interest in the physical. Inside the classroom, the student wants to de-plug and interact with fellow classmates. They can watch lectures at home and would rather engage in collaborative learning on campus. And while students may not be going to the library for books, they still see it as a prime space for studying and performing individual work—space that seems to be in increasingly high demand and short supply.

The realities of on-campus spaces haven't caught up with the demands and aspirations of either educators or students.

The current generation of students is reporting low levels of out-of-classroom collaboration—they would rather spend that time studying alone in a quiet space. Spaces designed to prioritize collaboration are interfering with students' desire for quiet spaces where they can focus on individual studies. Learning spaces designed for one-way communication, like lecture halls, cannot give students the interactive classroom environments they crave.

For the past two years, Gensler has conducted research about student preferences for learning and how campus design does and does not support them. Colleges and universities need to challenge conventional wisdom around campus design. Students see the classroom, not the quad, as the ideal place for collaboration and facilitated discussion and view lounges and libraries as spaces for heads-down focus work. Students are letting us know what works and what doesn't.

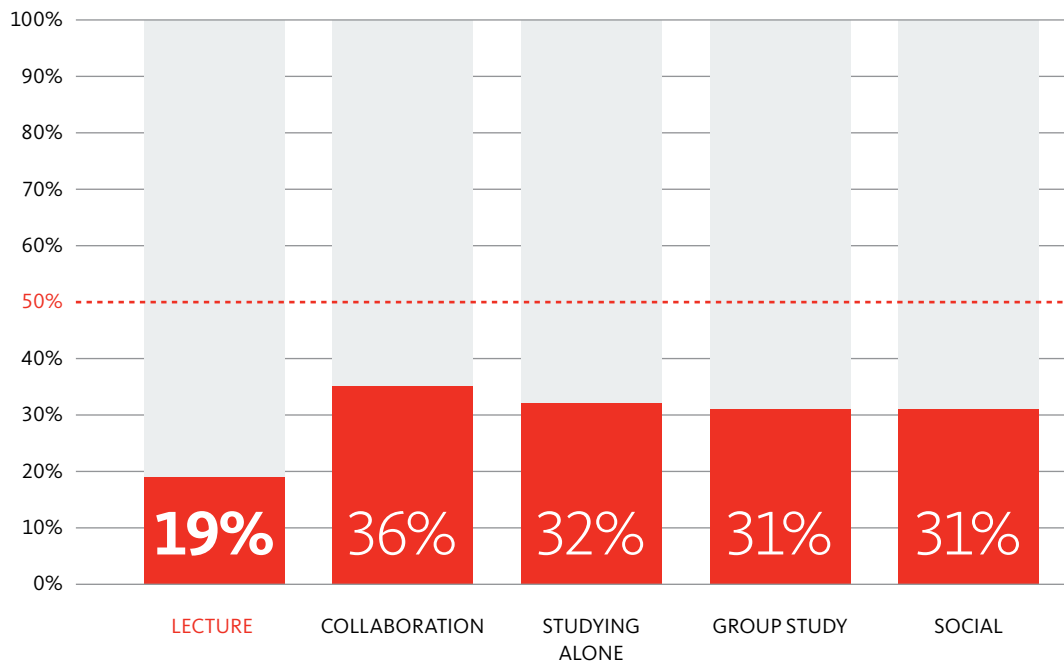
It's time to reinvent outdated models so that we can realign spaces with new educational realities and student needs.



Today's campus spaces aren't working for students.

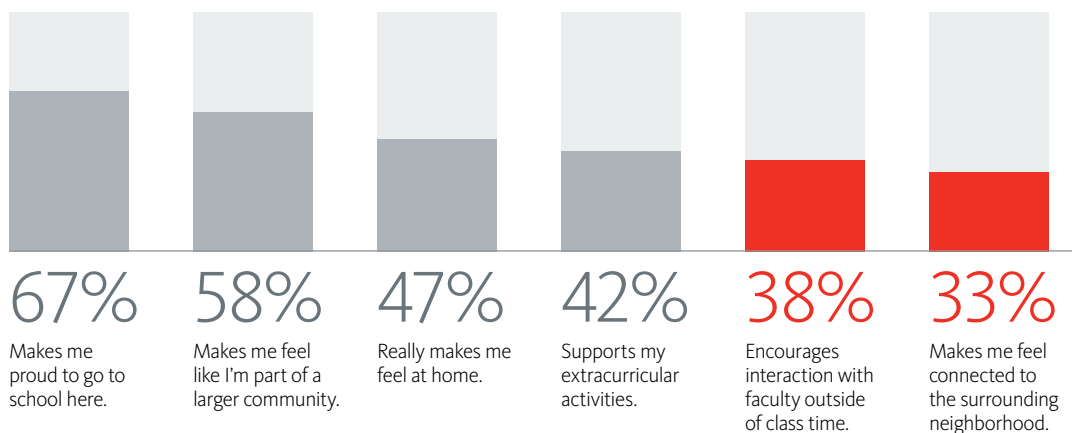
STUDENTS DON'T FIND CAMPUS SPACES EFFECTIVE

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO RATED SPACE AS VERY OR EXTREMELY EFFECTIVE



Across activity types very few students reported that spaces were effective (a rating of 4 or 5 on a five-point scale).

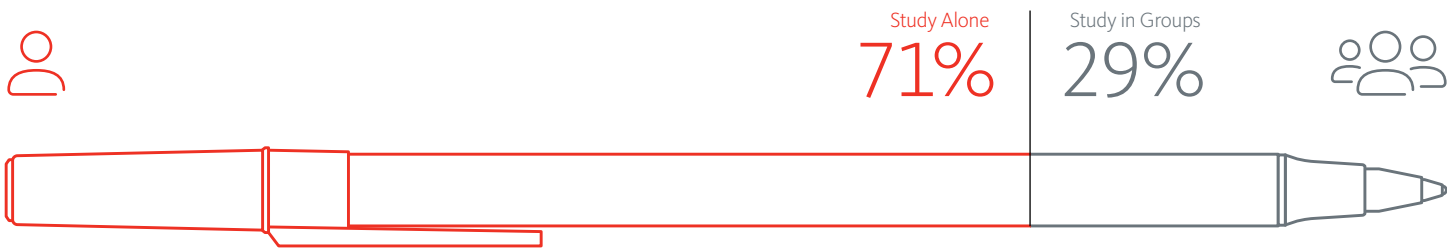
CAMPUS DESIGN ISN'T ENHANCING THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE



Students' ranking of on-campus experience was highly variable. Two-thirds say campus design makes them proud of their school (a ranking of 4 or 5 on a five-point scale), while only one-third feel the campus connects them to the surrounding neighborhood. Only slightly more feel it encourages interaction with faculty outside the classroom.

Independence is the foundation of the student experience.

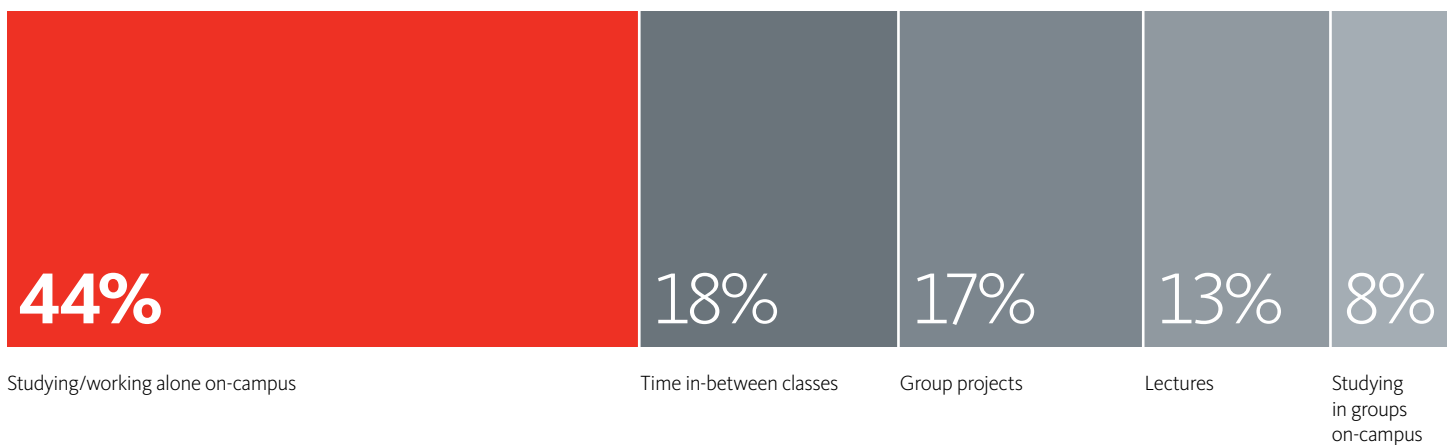
STUDENTS PREFER STUDYING ALONE ALMOST 3 TO 1



When asked about their study habits, students report an interest in studying alone versus in groups.

“I get more accomplished when I’m alone than when I’m with others. I can focus more easily on the task at hand.”

MOST ON-CAMPUS TIME IS SPENT WORKING ALONE



44% of on-campus time is spent studying or working alone, reinforcing the need for good focus spaces.

Great study spaces are hard to find.

LIBRARIES ARE IN HIGH DEMAND AND SHORT SUPPLY

If independent, study-alone time is fundamental to the student experience, campuses need to give students ample appropriate environments. For many, that means quiet environments where they can put their heads down and focus. Forty-three percent of students told us the library is where they prefer to study/work alone, and 26% reported lab/project/studio space was their favorite place for that heads-down time. But when asked to report where they had actually studied/ worked alone, the numbers flip. Only 22% report studying in the library and 38% in lab/project/studio space. Students want to study at the library, but they are more likely to head elsewhere or simply not find the space they need.

This may be explained by the noise: only 39% of respondents told us that the spaces where they worked/studied alone were quiet, a distressingly low number considering that 66% of students told us they prefer quiet when studying alone. With quiet space at a premium, colleges will have to rethink whether libraries should provide access to noise-producing activities.

PREFERRED PLACE TO STUDY/WORK ALONE

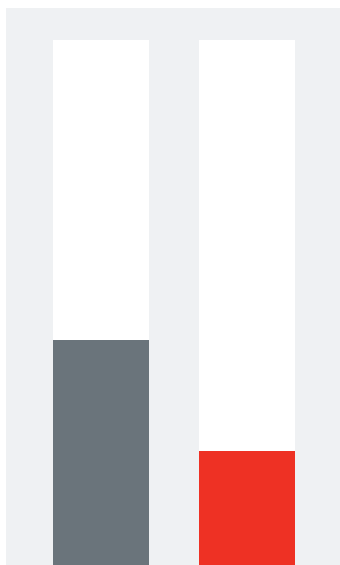
-vs-

REPORTED PLACE WHERE STUDIED/WORKED ALONE

PREFERRED QUIET STUDY TIME

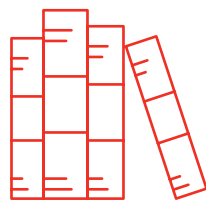
-vs-

REPORTED QUIET STUDY TIME

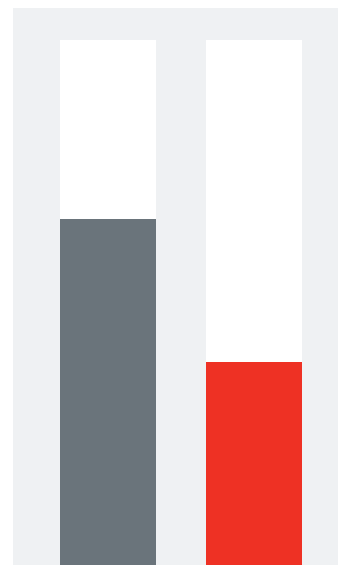


43% 22%

Respondents were asked to provide both the best place to study/work alone and the place in which they performed the activity. The library ranked first as the best place, but far less respondents report actually studying there than report it as ideal.



LIBRARY



66% 39%

When asked about the spaces in which they studied alone, 66% of students reported a preference for quiet space, while only 39% reported that the place in which they studied recently was quiet.



QUIET TIME

Technology isn't the key to great spaces.

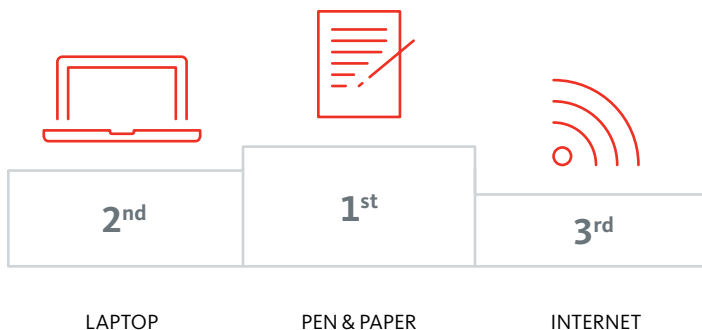
CLASSROOMS ARE WIRED BUT NOT INSPIRED

Over the past decade colleges and universities have made concerted efforts to increase on-campus technology access. High-speed Wi-Fi is nearly ubiquitous. High-definition televisions are situated in many buildings. These tech-rich environments certainly serve tech-savvy student bodies. When asked about the current functionality of campus spaces, students and educators placed support for technology at the top of the list—78% of lecture spaces support professors' technology—while experiential measures ranked significantly lower—only 48% were “comfortable,” 29% were “inspirational,” and 27% were “attractive.”

One explanation for these responses may be that technology by itself does not address student needs. When asked what tools they used while on-campus, “pen and paper” slightly out-ranks laptops and the internet across a variety of activities, illustrating that colleges and universities need to reconsider the emphasis on investing in new technologies for their buildings. Laptops and wireless connectivity are undoubtedly important in combination with less-technology-infused ways of working, but can't deliver on their own.

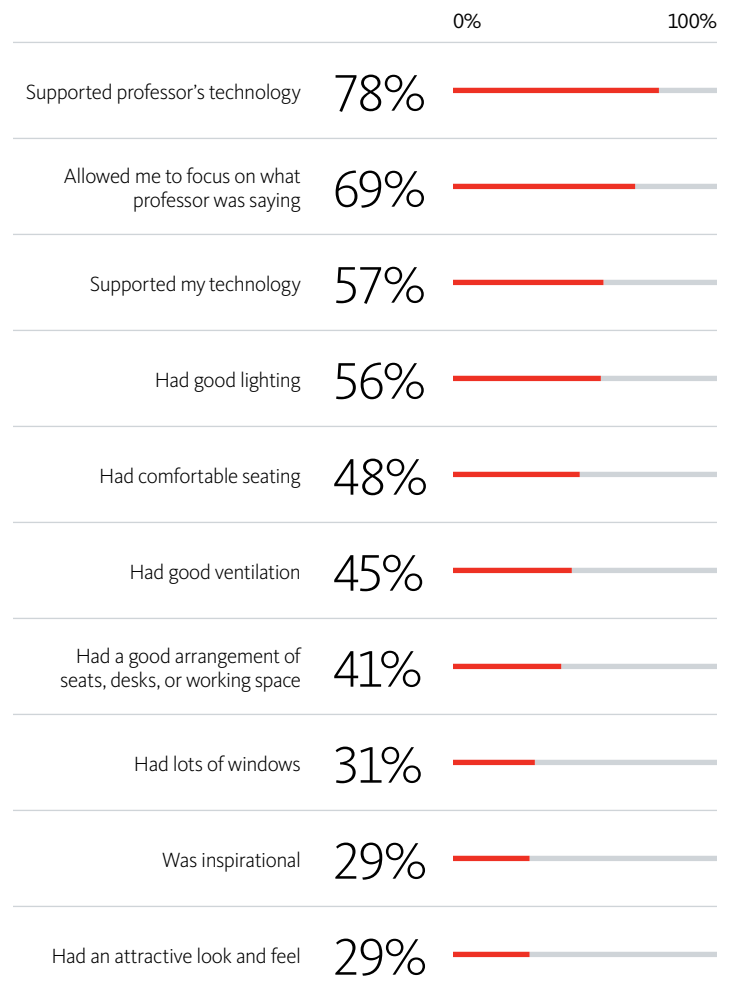
STUDY TOOLS

When asked what tools they use most, pen and paper ranked highest across all settings. Laptops and the internet were a close second and third.



Many institutions of higher learning may have reached a tech saturation point. Adding more computers, flat screen televisions and other systems will cease to have a greater return on investment. As many students come to campus with their own tech devices—from smart phones to tablets and laptops—this trend is poised to increase. Provide those students with easy access to wi-fi and they're set. What they don't, and can't, bring with them are dynamic, inspirational experiences.

FUNCTIONALITY OF LECTURE SPACE



Students to teachers: stop lecturing us.

STUDENTS WANT COLLABORATION IN THE CLASSROOM

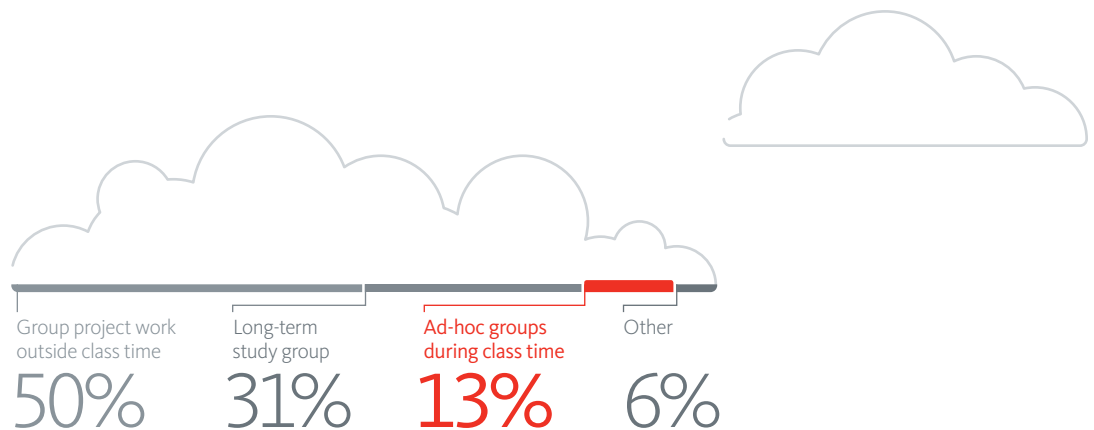
In a 2011 research study conducted by Gensler's Education + Culture practice area, students reported that effective teachers act as facilitators and that this multi-modal teaching style is the most effective pedagogy. The fact that students view lecture spaces as particularly ineffective underscores this point: for many, the lecture format is not just ideal, it's not working.

Current classroom experiences clearly aren't delivering the experience students want. 23% of students report no time collaborating on campus at all, and of those that did collaborate only 13% report breaking into groups to collaborate during class time. If collaboration is an important part of the learning process, its place is in the classroom where teachers can facilitate and direct conversation—expecting students to do it on their own is unlikely given their preferences, and students often view out-of-class group work as less than productive.

Traditional thinking about campus design is based on the idea that non-classroom spaces should be collaborative in purpose and promote interaction and collegiality among the student body. But that thinking is based on an education model in which lectures reign and interactions happen outside the classroom. A new model in which the classroom is the primary site for collaboration is necessary.

TYPES OF GROUP WORK ON CAMPUS

When asked to elaborate on the types of group work they performed on-campus, only 13% of respondents reported that collaboration happened during class time.



Dynamic learning environments are the competitive edge.

EXPERIENCE DIFFERENTIATES THE ON-CAMPUS EXPERIENCE

The growth of online learning opportunities and the question of what value-add a physical institution delivers are put in new light by these findings. Lectures aren't where universities compete—dynamic experiences are where physical institutions still have a leg up on the virtual.

Growth in online platforms offers a renewed challenge to the lecture—as Thomas L. Friedman notes in his *New York Times* op-ed “Come the Revolution,” published May 15, 2012: “Finally a generation that has grown up on these technologies is increasingly comfortable learning and interacting with professors through online platforms.”

Students are becoming comfortable using online venues for one-way learning models like lectures and top-tier universities are increasingly supplying the content. Schools from Stanford to Harvard and MIT are offering free online access to lectures and assignments, revolutionizing higher-education in the process.

These moves represent an unprecedented nod to expanding educational access around the world. But they also reveal an understanding of a shift in the university business model—it's not the information that makes these institutions great; it's the experience and environments for learning that will remain their competitive edge. On-campus learning should take place within interactive environments that complement the non-interactive online learning experience.

“My most memorable learning experiences are when the professor doesn't dominate the whole conversation. It's a discussion among the entire class and everyone gets to have their voice heard.”



How campus design can respond to changing realities.

Current thinking about campus design is falling short of addressing the needs and wants of students and educators. Here's what we think needs to happen in order to change this predicament.

PUT COLLABORATION IN THE CLASSROOM

This will require changing how teaching happens, and the right spaces can lead the way. It takes a remarkable teacher to make a lecture hall a participatory environment. Classrooms that provide flexible settings and support multi-modal, facilitated learning can assist in the change.

REMEMBER INDIVIDUAL SPACES

Students prefer studying alone to group study by a factor of almost 3:1, and quiet is as much a prerequisite for effective studying as it is hard to come by. This time alone represents almost half of the time students spend on campus. Consider the provision of individual on-campus space in light of student preferences and needs.



DELIVER EXPERIENCES, NOT JUST TECHNOLOGY

Balance investments in technology with investments in experiential qualities that make your campus shine. While wifi connections are important, environments that are inspirational and that also support different modes of learning and teaching are what will keep the physical campus relevant.



Methodology

Over the course of the 2011 fall semester, Gensler conducted a series of surveys of 250+ college students with the goal of identifying the factors and spaces that contribute to successful higher-education environments. The survey sample included 32% graduate students and 68% undergraduate students representing various disciplines and more than 116 colleges and universities throughout the United States.

The first was a profile survey, followed by five learning modes surveys—lectures, collaboration, studying or working alone, group studying, and time between classes. Conducted through a series of six short surveys on smart phones, each survey did three things: ask about the time spent in each study mode that week; ask specific questions about the space where students performed particular activities that week, with each week focusing on a different mode; and ask questions to understand students' on-campus experiences and preferences. This allowed the team to capture in-the-moment data, and by using a series of short surveys we achieved an unusually high participation rate over the course of the three months.

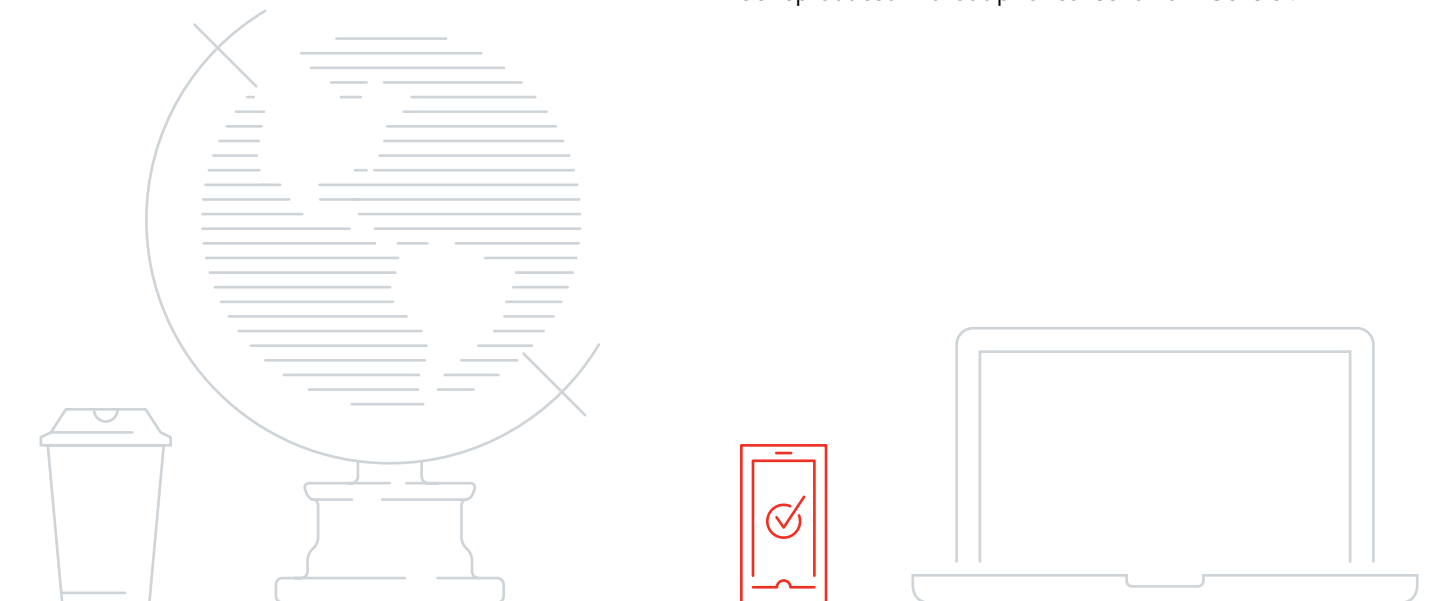
Further Questions

This research paints a provocative picture of on-campus life that challenges the effectiveness of current campus spaces and approaches. While many of the insights are actionable, some of which are described above, we also see vast opportunities for further investigation to continue to develop an understanding of how on-campus spaces can best support students.

The evolving role of the library, the traditional place for heads down study time, is of primary concern. For our part, we've embarked on a 2012/13 research initiative to better understand this problem. We will be going on-campus to benchmark usage and to see and hear what's working and what's not. As a container of information, the library seems the ideal study spot. Now that students seek more information online than in print, what's the library's main draw?

© Gensler 2012.

The information contained within this brochure is and shall remain the property of Gensler. This document may not be reproduced without prior consent from Gensler.



www.gensler.com/education

facebook.com/GenslerDesign

twitter.com/gensleroncities

Gensler

