

## **Intentionally and the Rarick Hall Renovation Project**

If you live in the Hays community or have recently visited, you are probably well aware of several recent construction projects on our beautiful campus, including the Center for Applied Technology, the Schmidt Foundation Center for Art and Design, and the Fischli-Wills Center for Student Success. The opening of a new building on our campus gives us an opportunity to re-envision how a physical space can directly enhance teaching, learning, and student success. These new spaces were intentionally designed to meet our students' evolving educational, social, physical space, and technology needs.

The summer meeting of our Alumni Board included a tour of our newer facilities. While touring Rarick Hall, our group bumped into Dr. Paul Adams, Dean of the College of Education. Impromptu, he was asked to discuss the reimagination of teacher education via the renovation. The narrative that follows is based on Paul's description of the reimagined teacher education spaces in Rarick Hall.

One of the things we wanted to do for a long time was to have a room that models the environment and furniture types and arrangements our future teachers would see in the classrooms where they will launch their careers. We wanted to create a state-of-the-practice teaching laboratory.

We gathered faculty members who had recent experience in school classrooms and asked them to envision a space to meet the experiential learning needs of our students and keep them "ahead of the game." We brought our students into the discussion by asking them what they thought would make this teaching laboratory an excellent resource for collaborative learning. The thoughtfulness behind this whole process, as described by Dean Adams, was very impressive.

What we heard from our teacher education students is the importance they place on learning environments that promote close collaboration with their peers. The Teaching Laboratory space was designed with this in mind. Everything in the lab was built to provide a high level of flexibility and to enhance teaching and learning. The area includes, for example, a u-shaped table with movable chairs around it. There are rocking stools that can easily be moved around the room. There are modular tables with whiteboard surfaces that can be placed together like puzzle pieces allowing multiple configurations to support students working in small and large groups. Other tables in the room have whiteboard surfaces that students can gather around as they work.

Another innovative space in Rarick Hall is the Tiger Stripes Lounge. It replaced the Instructional Resource Center (IRC). Previously, the IRC covered most of the central portion of the 2nd floor of Rarick Hall and was a repository for textbooks, teaching materials, and anything one might need to borrow for a classroom. With a wealth of online resources preferred and readily available, this space reflects how students now use learning resources and technology. We've also installed a 75-inch screen projection Smart TV that students can log into that includes a touch screen to facilitate collaborative work. Users can also meet via Zoom.

Of course, we haven't forgotten some of the basics. We still have paper cutters, colored paper rolls for bulletin board construction, a laminator, and die cutters. We will install even more

technology soon. Students asked us to keep a collection of books in the lounge, specifically trade books for future elementary school teachers to use in their coursework. We built a beautiful bookcase and will soon add a collection of Caldecott and Newbery Award-winning books.

Adjacent to the Tiger Stripes Lounge is a great place for aspiring teachers to get together: a conference room that can also double as a quiet study space. “This is one of the things we didn’t have before, a space like this one that our students designed. We feel this is very important,” said Adams.

Our tour of Rarick Hall then took us to the first floor and another reimagined space. Before the building was renovated, students didn’t really have a place to get together right before or between classes to prepare for a team presentation or read and do homework. So, one of the ideas was to turn the large and soon-to-be-vacated “Foundry” space into something useful. Today, the Foundry is a well-lit and open gathering space for all students, not just College of Education students. The area includes small meeting rooms with smart TVs, rolling whiteboards, free-standing tables, restaurant-style booths, and vending machines.

Outside the Foundry space, we’ve installed picnic tables, outlets for various devices, and of course, Wi-Fi reception. And we’ve installed landscaping that creates a beautiful open-air setting for community gatherings, quiet study or just relaxing between classes.

The intentionality built into the Rarick Hall renovation is also apparent in the smallest details. Additional benches and furniture create nooks for students are new features on some floors. We’ve also installed more glass boards for students to brainstorm, solve problems, or doodle. Faculty can also use this space for small group work during class.

So, when you come to Rarick Hall, take a moment and wander a bit. I think, like me, you will marvel at the remarkable transformation of this facility.