St. Mary’s University
Teaching Space Utilization Study
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Presentation to Faculty Senate
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Who is Sightlines?

Sightlines is a facilities asset advisory firm with offices in Connecticut, Oregon, and Pennsylvania that has worked with more than 450 colleges and universities to provide information and analysis to senior officials to enable them to more effectively steward the physical assets of the campus. In alignment with the 2nd strategy of Gateway Goal #5 (copy attached), St. Mary’s University is partnering with Sightlines to complete a comprehensive assessment of facilities to create an alignment between the space, capital and operating needs of the University. This approach to integrated campus stewardship addresses three main areas:

- Capital: Investment planning to align mission and risk
- Operations: Improve effectiveness and lower overhead
- Space: Get the most from your biggest asset

The assessment is broken down into two “projects”. The first is a facilities measurement, benchmarking and analysis assessment. The second is a teaching space utilization study.

Facilities Measurement, Benchmarking and Analysis
Teaching Space Utilization Study

What is the teaching space utilization study?

At St. Mary’s University, like most institutions in the country, academic programs have changed significantly over the past twenty-five years. While curriculums, teaching methods, and technology have evolved over this period, learning environments do not always keep pace. Sightlines has been engaged to help St. Mary’s assess the alignment of programmatic requirements with teaching spaces and develop a strategy to optimize those teaching spaces.

Although it is impossible to accurately forecast space changes 5 or more years in the future, there are methods to understand why spaces are functioning effectively or not. Sightlines believes that an understanding of the utilization rates, the space use, and the space users’ requirements are key. It is also important to create a context by understanding success factors at other campuses. Good ideas occur in public and private universities, large and small campuses, and residential and commuting campuses. Sightlines has worked with dozens of institutions to define best practices for teaching spaces, identify exciting approaches to classroom configurations and amenities, and explore creative scheduling options.

What is the objective of the focus group discussions?

Sightlines conducted physical inspections on approximately 130 teaching spaces during the week of March 12th. Data collection included room schedules and occupancy rates for the past four semesters. In addition, each room was visually inspected to assess conditions and available technology within each space.

Focus group sessions will be held the week of April 9th to capture the St. Mary’s faculty and student perceptions and expectations for teaching spaces. These findings will be compared to the statistical data gathered during the onsite visit. In addition, there are many aspects of teaching spaces that are unquantifiable and known only to those who are actively teaching or learning in the rooms. Comments of faculty and students will be integrated with the statistical findings to develop a plan that best meets the programmatic and capital goals of the University.
What will the process look like?

Components of Informed Decision Making

User Perceptions
Meeting with key individuals

Registrar
- Review scheduling data
- Understand scheduling process

Focus Group Discussions
- Faculty
- Staff
- Students

Objectives
- Capture faculty, staff, and student perceptions and expectations for teaching space
- Compare statistical data to user experiences
- Target spaces with statistical data and experiential misalignments to prompt further investigation and find solutions
What is the Technology Component of the Space Utilization Study?

The goal of technology assessment is to identify how well the components of each classroom contribute to the ability to teach in that space. The goal is not to achieve the highest score in every category for every classroom, but rather to match the technological components in the room to the programmatic usage of the space. In general, a higher score will represent a room that is more flexible in the types of classes that can be taught there.

Technological components (see diagram below) were inventoried through scoring during the on-site classroom walkthroughs. The team assigned the appropriate score for each category based on what was present in the room. A higher score is not presumed to be the ultimate goal for every room. The scoring allows us to correlate features present in the space with the space’s ability to support different programs and types of classes in the space.
Each institution, and often each department within an institution, will prioritize different elements of the technology assessment. It is recommended that we go through a goal setting exercise at either the institution or department level to identify what the “ideal” classroom would look like in terms of the technological components we track. Then each room can be compared to that ideal, goals can be set, and opportunities for improvement become clear.

Ultimately, we do calculate an overall technology score for each room based on the components mentioned above, but the categories are all weighted differently; components such as projection and computer access are weighted highest while windows and lighting are weighted lowest. Weighting is based on how much that component can impact the flexibility of the room’s usage by different classes.

Examples for each of the main components of the technology assessment are included below:

**Does the room support the use of computers?**
- Highest score for having either computers already set up at every workstation or having plugs at every station, mid score for just the faculty member having computer
access but students having access to plugs around the perimeter of the room, lowest score for very few or no plugs accessible to students

- Having strong internet access facilitates the full utilization of a computer during class. How good is the internet access for the room? Highest score for strong internet connection, lowest score for no internet access

**Projection**
- Having a way to project visual content to the class is an important part of today’s multi-media teaching style. What type of projection capability does the room have?
- Highest score for a large tv screen or short-throw projector, mid score for other projector types, lowest score for no projection capability
- Having easy to use projector screens helps to facilitate the ease of sharing visual content with the class. What types of projector screens are present in the room?
- Highest score for multiple automatic projection screens, lowest score for a single manual screen.

**Boards**
- Having boards for the faculty and/or students to write on is an important feature for most classes. Having multiple boards allows for more work to be shown without erasing. How many boards are there in the room?
- Highest points given for multiple boards, mid for one board, lowest for no boards
- The latest in board technology allows for the most flexibly by different programs. What types of boards are in the room?
- Smart boards score highest followed by whiteboards, with blackboards scoring lowest

**Video Capability**
- Classes can use technology to enhance the class through videoconferencing or even just recording of a lecture for later viewing, which can facilitate remote learning and allow for more students to access that class. What type of video capabilities are present in the room?
- Highest score for ebeam technology, mid for videoconferencing, lowest score for none

**Sound Amplification**
- Sound amplification capability ensures that all students are able to hear what is being taught regardless of the size of the room or potential distracting noises in the vicinity. This aspect is only scored for larger rooms over 1,000 SF and/or greater than 30 seats. What type of sound amplification is present in the room?
- Highest score for both audio and speech amplification, lowest score for neither

**Windows**
- Airflow is important to maintaining a comfortable classroom atmosphere. How is airflow in this room achieved?
- Highest points for air-conditioning, mid for operable windows, low for neither
- Window treatments help to manage the light in the room, and the desired level of outside lighting might change between classes or during a class. How are window treatments operated?
- Highest points for automatically controlled treatments, lowest points for manual treatments

**Lighting**
- The lighting needs can change between classes or even during a class depending on whether the class is watching a video, reading, working on computers, working in groups, etc. Having a high degree of flexibility in lighting helps to support this variety of work. What level of control is there over lighting in the room?
- Highest points for zone lighting with dimming capability, lowest points for no control over lighting aside from flipping on one light switch.

*What is the Project timeline?*

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