

TI Learning Spaces Annual Report

*Prepared by Patrick Kelly & D'Arcy Norman, Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning, Educational Development Unit.
Reporting period April 18 2016 to April 30, 2017 (As of February 28, 2016)*

The Taylor Institute is the first building in Canada dedicated solely to improving postsecondary teaching and learning.

The groundbreaking building is located at the heart of campus, supporting the institute's work to build communities and link networks. The building was designed with three guiding principles: flexibility, transparency and collaboration.

The most striking feature of the building is the 220-foot-long translucent glass spine, which glows like a beacon at night. Inside the building, the Taylor Institute's learning spaces are fully flexible and infused with technology, allowing instructors and students to experiment with advanced teaching and learning approaches.

This is a one-of-a-kind teaching and research facility, with technologies that are not found anywhere else on campus – some of which have never been used in this configuration.

The main floor of the Taylor Institute comprises of 5 flexible learning spaces, 1 large open space forum, and an informal gallery, all of which are available for instructors to apply to teach university courses in.

TI Learning Space application process for university courses

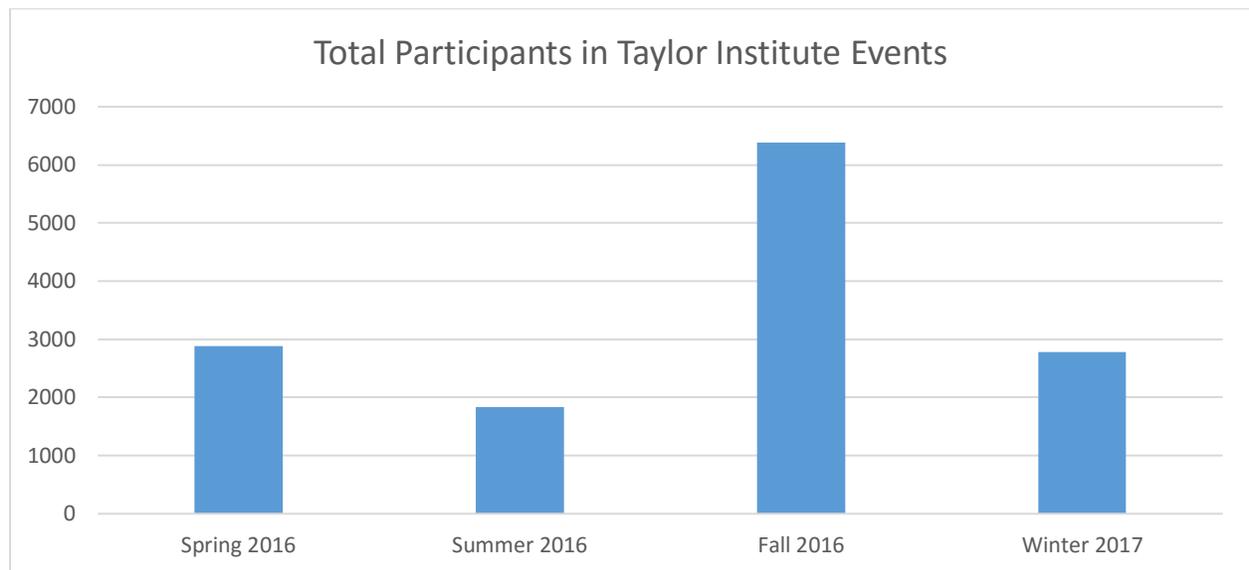
Applications to teach in the TI Learning Spaces is open to anyone teaching a University of Calgary course. Applications are due twice a year, at which time the TI Learning Space Committee meets to review the applications and determine the schedule of courses for the upcoming semesters. The TI Learning Space Committee is comprised of representatives from the TI, faculty, the Registrar's office, and both undergraduate and graduate student associations. Once the applications have been reviewed the committee co-chairs (Patrick Kelly and D'Arcy Norman) follow up with each instructor to ensure any feedback from the committee is clear.

TI Learning Space support

1. **One-on-one support:** Once the instructors know they will be teaching in the TI, a TI staff member from either the Learning and Instruction Design or the Learning Technology groups will contact the instructor and become their main TI contact. This TI staff member ensures the instructor is supported by providing information, answering questions, or connecting with the appropriate person in the TI
2. **Technology:** workshops that are focused on using the technology in the learning spaces are scheduled prior to the start of the semester to provide orientations to the instructors and answer any questions.
3. **Ongoing Support:** instructors are encouraged to participate in a "Taylor Institute Instructors" community of practice, where they are able to share their experiences with each other to help plan their activities. Taylor Institute staff (including Learning Technologies Coaches) also provide continuous consultation with these instructors. A new Learning Spaces Workshop was piloted with graduate students as part of the Graduate Student Teaching Program. This workshop will be adapted and offered to TI instructors (and others in the community) in Spring 2017.
4. **"Building Stewards"** – students, hired on a part-time basis to restore the learning studios at the end of each weekday by adjusting furniture and technologies into the default layout, cleaning whiteboards and touch screens as needed, and ushering students out of the building when it closes at 5:30pm. See appendix 1 for the job profile for this position.

Demographics of TI learning spaces use

Semester	University Courses (registrar-scheduled)		Daily Use Events (non-registrar-scheduled)		Professional Development Workshops		Conference and Events Management Events	
	# courses	# of students	# events	# of participants	# events	# of participants	# events	# of participants
Spring 2016	4	225	22	1010	7	255	11	1390
Summer 2016	7	320	6	315	15	625	6	575
Fall 2016	24	1284	10	3165	19	860	13	1070
Winter 2017	24	998	7	505	11	180	9	1100



Community of practice

The TI learning spaces community of practice was formed to further support instructors teaching in the TI. Since different instructors were in the learning spaces for each semester we treated each semester as a mini community of practice and scheduled 1-hour sessions throughout the Fall 2016 and Winter 2017 semesters. The purpose of these gatherings was to bring together the instructors and TI staff to build relationships, make connections, share ideas, and learn from each other.

During the Fall 2016 semester we held 3 sessions (for 5 instructors), and 1 session (for 2 instructors) in the Winter 2017 semester with 1 more planned in March. (See Appendix 2 for notes from these sessions)

To extend the mini community of practices a celebratory lunch on December 19, 2016 was held to bring together instructors from both the ending Fall 2016 and the upcoming Winter 2016 semesters. Of the 24 instructors that attended 3 Fall 2016 instructors presented their experiences of teaching in the TI that sparked in-depth questions and discussions.

Highlights from all discussions include:

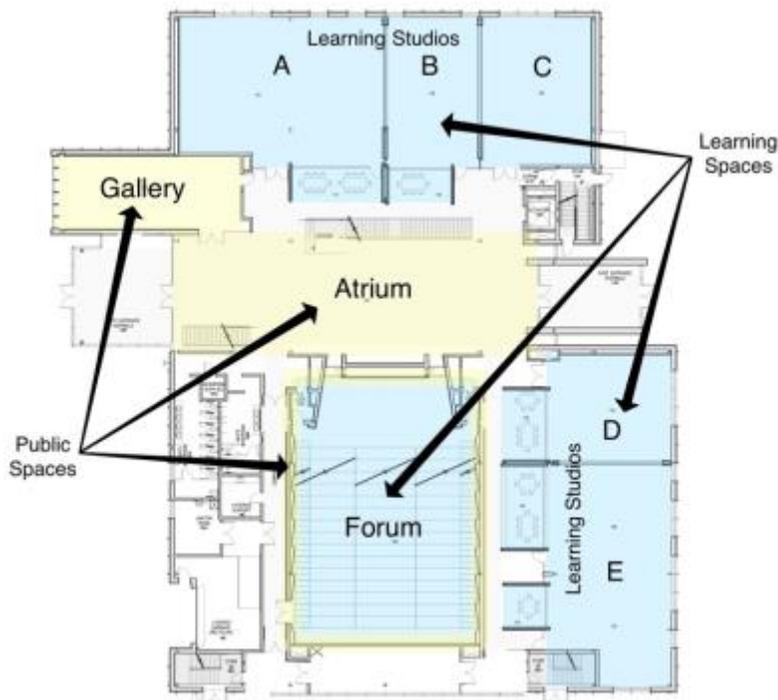
1. What have you learned from teaching in the TI so far?
 - Enabled me as a teacher, more discussions, more group work
 - The space can drive active teaching and learning, students can see each other with higher student engagement
 - Shared displays for group includes all members (not feeling left out or looking over shoulders to see)
 - Try non-traditional assessments, such as student performances
2. What challenges have you found?
 - How to use technology effectively
 - How to sustain the course design next year or in other spaces?
 - If activity design relies on TI tech, how to share displays elsewhere
3. How have you used the technology and spaces?
 - Use digital posters instead of midterms with peer assessment rubric
 - Problem based learning
 - Group projects
4. What feedback do you have for us?
 - Groups at tables works well
 - Expandable rooms are great for combining classes
 - Forum, great acoustics and can be cold sometimes
5. What feedback do you have from students?
 - Students report feeling of inequality between those who have laptops and those who don't - who gets to "drive" the group work? No laptop means you're not leading it.
 - Pushing the microphone button disrupts the flow of conversation

Lessons learned

- Include the Registrar’s office in the process to avoid confusion about allowed class schedule patterns, enrolment caps, and compatibility with scheduling elsewhere on campus.
- Include faculty and department admin coordinators to follow up with instructors to ensure accurate scheduling and capacity information is used.
- Enforce the enrollment cap for the learning spaces – overloading the studios is possible, but results in a highly degraded learning experience for all students in the class.
- Importance of setting expectations about what level of support/service is possible, and to work with instructors to enable them to set up their studio before class.

Through the first 4 semesters of university courses being hosted in the Taylor Institute, we have revised the practical capacity for each of the learning studios on the first floor of the building:

Learning Space Capacity and Sample Layouts



Room	Capacity
Learning Studio A	40
Learning Studio B	30
Learning Studio C	35
Learning Studio AB	70
Learning Studio BC	65
Learning Studio ABC	105
Learning Studio D	25
Learning Studio E	40
Learning Studio DE	65
Forum (Flat floor)	132

Figure 1. Layout and capacity of Taylor Institute learning spaces.

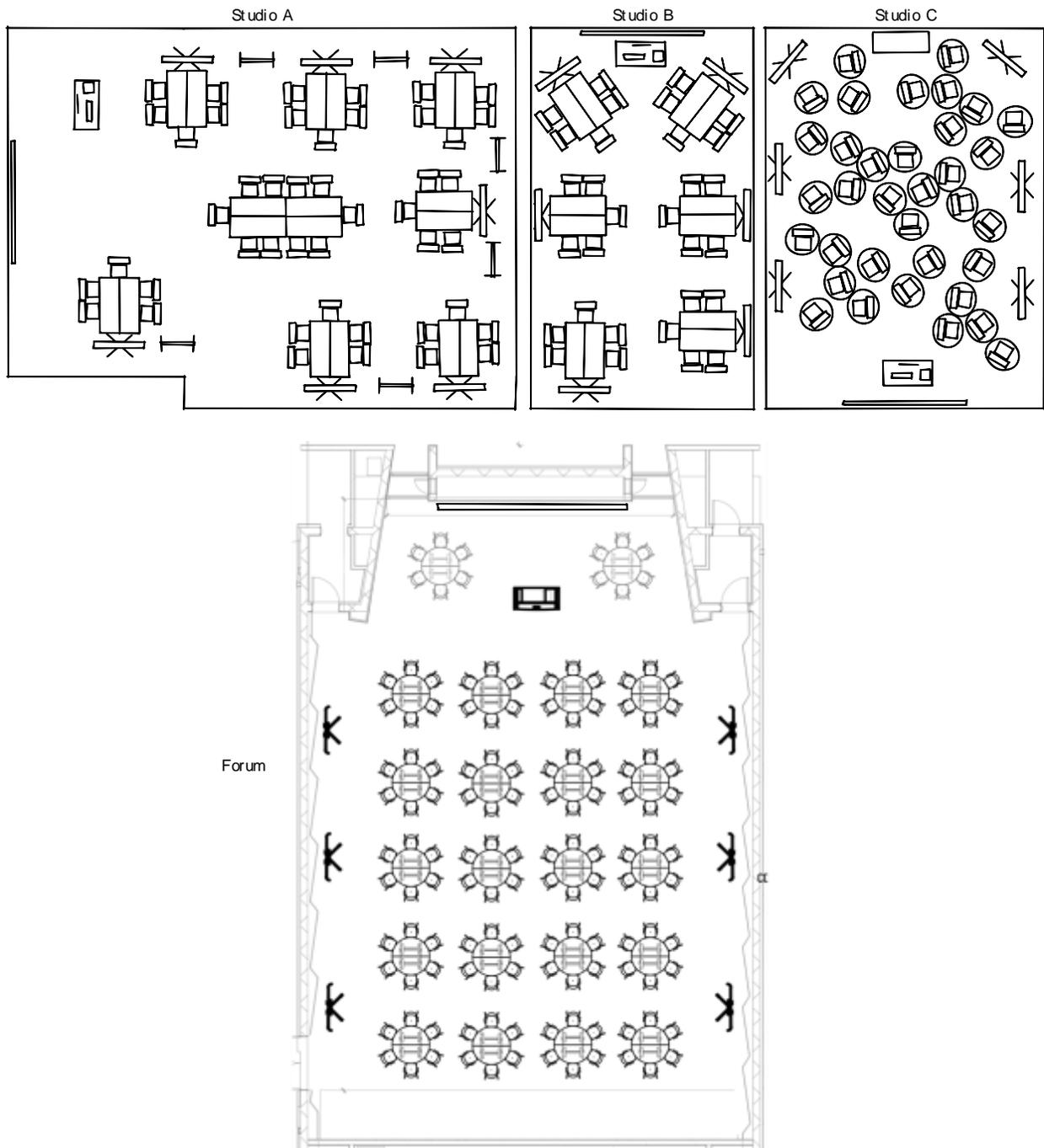


Figure 2. Sample layouts used in some of the Taylor Institute learning spaces.

Appendix 1: “Building Stewards” job profile

Nature of the Work (To whom position reports, complexity and amount of work/peak periods, other conditions):

Under the supervision of the Taylor Institute’s Learning Technologies and Environment Operations Specialist, the Taylor Institute Building Stewards will provide daily support to ensure the Taylor Institute public and learning spaces are arranged and prepared to best meet the needs of instructors and students across the University of Calgary. These positions will provide an essential resource to ensuring the proper functioning of this unique space. To ensure energy efficiency, they will ensure that all power to the Institute’s learning technologies is powered-down. The building stewards will also ensure that the furniture in each of the learning studios is re-arranged and organized at the end of each day, itemize any supply and maintenance needs, and ensure that all spaces are properly secured. The building stewards will also notify occupants of the building hours at closing.

The TI will require 2 building stewards per semester, who will work collaboratively to ensure the Taylor Institute public and learning spaces are arranged and prepared to best meet the needs of instructors and students across the University of Calgary. These will be part-time student hourly positions at a rate of pay of \$14/hour. Normal work hours will be 10 hours per week, from approximately 4:30pm – 6:30pm each day, Monday to Friday (or as needed).

Primary Purpose of the Position (*Key purpose, functions, roles*):

Specifically, the Taylor Institute Building Stewards will:

- Re-arrange and organize furniture in the Taylor Institute learning studios and public spaces
- Tidy and dispose of any trash left on the floors, furniture or spaces in the learning studios and public spaces
- Ensure that all spaces are properly locked and secured
- Notify occupants of the building closing times and ensure all occupants have cleared building spaces by and shortly after closing (i.e. 5:00pm)
- Power-down any learning technologies in the learning studios
- Clean and reset the technology cart monitors as required
- Ensure equipment in teaching stations are properly stored and secured
- Conduct daily maintenance of learning studio microphones, including recharging batteries
- Identify maintenance issues and/or materials needed in learning studios
- Maintain and document issues with items in the learning technology lending library inventory
- Provide assistance in raising and lowering the Skyfold walls as needed

Other duties may be assigned as required.

Qualifications/Expertise Required:

- Currently enrolled as student at the University of Calgary.
- Excellent communication, organization and interpersonal skills.
- Leadership, self-motivation, self-direction, and an ability to work independently and as part of a team.
- Professional rapport that is suitable and complementary to the vision of the Taylor Institute.
- Willing to participate in on-the-job training and development necessary for carrying out duties and responsibilities.
- Ability to move furniture and other items as needed (some physical lifting will be required).

Appendix 2: Summary of Instructors' Community of Practice Sessions

September 30, 2016 (2 instructors)

What is going well?

- Walking around with students
- The light, furniture, layout
- Enabled me as a teacher, more discussion, more group work
- The space can drive active teaching and learning
- Students see each other, not just facing the teacher
- Higher student engagement --> active students
- Limnu is awesome

Challenges, what could be better or easier?

- Whiteboards are hard to move
- Technology orientation (limnu, solstice)
- Always on microphones for students, pushing the button disrupts the flow
- How to use technology effectively

What other feedback do you have?

- Groups at tables works well
- Expandable rooms are great for combining classes
- Forum, great acoustics and can be cold sometimes

October 28, 2016 (1 instructor)

What kinds of activities have you and your students done during classes in the TI?

- Solstice pod - collaborating on visualizing data sets in groups (teams of 4)

What has worked well?

- Shared display for group includes all members (not feeling left out or looking over shoulders to see)
- Scholar's chairs allow easy group formation/reformation

What challenges have you found?

- How to sustain the course design next year or in other spaces?
- If activity design relies on TI tech, how to share displays elsewhere

Do you have any tips/suggestions/requests?

- Groups of more than ~6 per collaboration cart may be too much - issues with multiple people fitting in front of screen and multiple people interacting with software
- What alternatives to Solstice are available for use elsewhere? Wireless projectors?
- More rooms with scholar's chairs - don't need tables and they can be in the way
- Should we put scholar's chairs into other studios?
- Standing height tables? No chairs?
- Make sure everyone knows the podium is adjustable height

Feedback from students?

- Students report feeling of inequality between those who have laptops and those who don't - who gets to "drive" the group work? No laptop means you're not leading it.

November 25, 2016 (2 instructors)

How can student assessment look in the TI spaces?

- Try non-traditional assessments, such as student performances

Feb 8, 2017 (2 instructors)

What have you learned so far teaching in the TI?

- Standing in the middle of the room to feel closer to the students
- Being mindful of challenges such as student names
- Need to include all students in large room
- 50 minute classes needs super organization

How have you used the technology and spaces?

- Use digital posters instead of midterms with peer assessment rubric
- Problem based learning
- Group projects

Appendix 3: Summary of feedback from instructors and students

Students in Learning Studios:

The Learning Experience

- The learning studios create an environment that encourages group work and discussions
 - o Students enjoy group work as it provides a low pressure environment to discuss ideas
 - o Even students who do not enjoy group work appreciated the value of having group discussions
 - o Group work increased student engagement
 - o Students find it valuable to be able to hear a wide array of opinions and arguments
- Students need time to adjust to the new environment too
 - o Students reported that it took them time to adjust to having so many screens (collaboration carts)
 - o Students also needed time to adjust to the seating arrangements
- Some students didn't see added value of being in a learning studio as opposed to a conventional lecture hall

The Furniture

- The tables allowed for group discussions to flourish
 - o Being able to see their peers' faces was important for students
- Students are not accustomed to facing away from the front
 - o Some students appreciated having the collaboration carts to look at when taking notes
 - o Other students complained that they had to crane their necks frequently to view the professor or the projector screen

The Technologies

- Padlet was used as an annotation and discussion tool
 - o Students enjoyed the way it made idea sharing a visual experience
 - o Some students did not see the added value of annotating literature digitally
- TopHat
 - o Some students really enjoy TopHat as a quizzing tool
 - o Other students found the program to be finicky and inaccurate
- Google Docs was used as an annotation tool
 - o There were mixed reviews: Some students like using Google Docs, while others found it unnecessary or uncooperative
- There was an attempt to use Solstice
 - o Students found difficulties downloading and using
 - o Students did not find it as useful as expected

Instructors in Learning Studios

What instructors like about the Learning Studios:

- The learning environment is not us vs. them
 - o Instructors were able to walk among the students and engage with them
- They described the space as a place where they feel enabled as a teacher
 - o The space allowed for better discussions and more group work
 - o The space drives active teaching and learning

- Students were more engaged and active in the classroom
- The ability to view content on collaboration carts allowed all students to be included in group activities as no one had to look over shoulders to see a screen
- The aesthetic appeal
 - Open space
 - Natural lights

Suggestions for the TI

- More intensive orientation to the building
 - How-to's for all the options available (Solstice, Limnu, TopHat, collaboration carts and apps)
- Increase communication before and during the semester in the TI
 - Provide information on how many collaboration carts are in each learning studio
 - Seeing as the learning environment is conducive to group work and discussion-based classes, instructors would appreciate support on how to engage students who are resistant to group activities
- Somehow having more agency with the collaboration carts
 - Ability to download apps or programs
 - Ability to save group work and files on the collaboration carts, or take screenshots with collaboration carts
- Office supplies and printers for instructors and students
 - As their home faculties are often across campus, instructors would appreciate having these supplies available

Suggestions for campus development

- Better space design
 - Level floors
 - Moveable furniture
 - Moveable whiteboards
 - Natural lighting
 - Electrical outlets
- Classrooms that are better designed for group work (and can accommodate large classes that want to do group work as well)

Students in and around the Building

The technologies

- Students hardly used the technology but found it user friendly
 - On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 star being not at all and 5 stars being very frequently, 65% of students reported they hardly used the technology available, where 65% consists of the 1 star and 2 star ratings
 - Students rated the user-friendliness of the technology 3.93 stars out of 5, with 5 stars being very user friendly
 - The most common usage for the collaboration carts is as a digital whiteboard

The furniture

- Students recommend at least adding cushions to the atrium
 - Students would rather not sit on the dirty floor

- Cushions would also make the atrium comfier for studying
- Students don't like the short tables
 - Students would like to be able to study at a table with a comfortable, ergonomic height
- Overall, many students reported the furniture is very comfortable, but they would like to see more furniture added

What students like most about the TI

- Windows and natural lights
- An open atmosphere
- The building is quiet
- The cleanliness of the building
- The piano

Suggestions for the TI

- Students would like more furniture and places to study
- Students would like more outlets
- Students don't like that the water fountain is only for filling water bottles and not for drinking from

Suggestions for campus

- Piano
- Open atmosphere
- Windows, natural light
- Spaces designed for studying (students really like the hanging pods and the breakout rooms)
- Students feel there is too much empty space in the TI, and that the wasted space could be used for more study spaces for students
- A water fountain that students can drink from, not just for water bottles
- More outlets
- Students would prefer if the tables were better suited for studying (at a better height)

Appendix 4: Media Articles

The #EDUC201 Digital Poster Fair: Bridging the gap between theory and practice

[December 22, 2016](#)

By David Scott and Jason Ribeiro

One of the great challenges we have in teacher education concerns the need to ensure that our teaching reflects the approaches to education we encourage our students to enact in their practice. In this regard, an overwhelming body of research in the field of education points to a need to move away from transmission-based approaches to teaching and learning that emphasize the ability to memorize disconnected facts divorced from the lived experience of students (Friesen & Scott, 2013). In the place of such practices, emerging research calls for the design of learning experiences that possess “an authenticity, [and a sense] that the work being done is ‘real work’ that reflects the living realities of the discipline being taught” (WNCP, 2011). Educators advocating for this approach to education, argue that each discipline (e.g., mathematics and history) has its own particular ways of generating knowledge and assessing what counts as quality work. Attuned to the nature of a particular discipline, the job of educators thus becomes finding developmentally appropriate ways to apprentice young people into such practices (Perkins, 2009).

Alongside these insights, we additionally know that learning becomes more meaningful and relevant when students are given opportunities to articulate their learning within public forums where they are required to interact in spontaneous ways with people they do not know (Rushton, Malone & Middleton, 2014). Within such forums, possibilities exist for the promotion of multiple literacies and multimodalities (Kress, 2003) that leverage the power of new technologies to achieve deep active learning (Beetham & Sharpe, 2013). These learning experiences are especially impactful when they are coordinated for first-year students (Sumara, 2011).

Putting theory into practice

Seeking to model the kind of teaching practices the educational research literature calls for, Dr. David Scott and Ph.D. student, Jason Ribeiro from the Werklund School of Education set out to create a different kind of assessment experience for the first year students taking EDUC 201: Introduction to Educational Studies. On November 25th, 2016, they organized the #EDUC201 Digital Poster Fair at the Taylor Institute (TI) for Teaching and Learning. Envisioned as a mini conference, the fair afforded groups of four students the opportunity to present their research stemming from a significant educational issue within a public forum attended by Werklund faculty and graduate students, as well as the larger University community. Divided up into three one-hour sessions, each session kicked off with a mini-keynote from an invited guest speaker.

What is a Digital Poster Showcase?

Using Rushton, Malone and Middleton’s (2014) work as a foundation, Scott and Ribeiro modified the creation and displaying of traditional research posters to now include performance, video, imagery, text and voice in a single PowerPoint slide. A digital poster showcase creates a multimodal learning environment that fosters diverse opportunities for students and attendees to engage with course materials and one another (e.g. remote cam sharing).

During the lead up to the event, students worked with Scott and Ribeiro to craft a research question that reflected a contemporary issue in education, found peer reviewed articles addressing their question, synthesized findings, and then came to their own conclusions on their topic. They then had students examine both strong and weak examples of research posters, which students critiqued in relation to the assessment rubric. Students were also given opportunities to receive formative feedback on their poster layout and design. Students submitted their

posters on both D2L, as well as a OneDrive folder that allowed for easy access on the video monitors on the day of the event. Conference-style documents were also created to assist and engage the attendees (e.g. event program, assignment rubrics for judges, #EDUC201 Twitter chat, etc.).

Who attended?

In total over 160 students participated in one of the three sessions. The event was further enriched by the presence of Werklund School academics Dr. Dianne Gereluk, Dr. Mairi McDermott, and Dr. Catherine Burwell, who provided the keynote presentations. Around 30 faculty and graduate students additionally gave up their time to act as judges for students' presentations.

Impact

This shift in assessment practices allowed Scott and Rebeiro to redefine what it means to provide students with a rigorous and intellectually challenging course. Often rigour is understood as imparting more, and increasingly sophisticated information to students. However, within the digital poster fair rigour is better understood as "being in the company of a passionate adult who is rigorously pursuing inquiry in the area of their subject matter and is inviting students along as peers in that discourse" (Rosenstock, as cited in Friesen & Scott, 2013, p. 12). Through creating a space where students presented their research in ways that mirrored how academics present their scholarship at conferences, a shift occurred for students away from learning about the field of education, to participating in the community they are being inducted into.

Ultimately, students were grateful for the opportunity to showcase their work in a professional manner and interact with the various attendees. In a subsequent feedback survey on student experiences in EDUC 201, many students identified this event as the highlight of the course. The level of engagement in this event was additionally demonstrated through the active social media response, including Twitter, where students promoted their work and engaged with the broader education community.

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Learning spaces, connection and community

[February 3, 2017](#)

By Natasha Kenny and Nancy Chick, Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning

In December, we attended a celebratory lunch and debrief with instructors who taught in the learning studios in the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning (TI). After the first official semester of fall course offerings, staff at the TI were interested in learning more about instructors' experiences teaching in the TI.

What surprised us most throughout this discussion was how many times the themes of *community* and *connection* came up in the discussion. Yes, the instructors reflected that the flexible furniture and technology allowed them to experiment with new collaborative learning strategies. However, what was most resonant was how the intentional use of these spaces fostered a new and noteworthy sense of community and connection among the students and instructors.

With the flat floors, no "front" of the room, and typical configuration of 4-6 students sitting in groups around movable tables and chairs, instructors were embedded within the students' space, rather than positioned in the traditionally separate space of the teacher. Instructors also noticed the highest attendance rates they had ever had in their classes. The level of participation during class, according to one instructor, felt like students were interacting around dining room tables. Everyone knew each other's names, and many students arrived early to class with the sole purpose of talking with their classmates. Even in larger classes of 120 students, instructors and students got to know a little more about one another throughout the semester, resulting in a greater sense of presence and engagement by everyone.

Research suggests how important social connection and a positive sense of community is to supporting university students' success and well-being (Schreiner, 2016). There is little doubt that universities can do more to provide opportunities for students to network with their peers, interact with faculty, and build positive relationships with those across our campus. What we are beginning to learn, even in the early days of teaching in the TI, is how important learning space design is to facilitating these positive connections.

What are the features of a learning space that create connection and community? Simple design strategies that disrupt traditional classroom configurations. No stage for any sage. Chairs on wheels and flexible furniture that enables conversation, dialogue and collaboration. Spaces that are infused with light and allow those inside to see that they're connected to the surrounding campus. Flat floor seating areas that break down traditional classroom power structures. Screens and white boards positioned around the room to enable multiple sight lines to reinforce small group contexts and allow learners to share and get feedback on their work.

There is certainly more research to be done, but what we are learning quickly is that space matters. It is time to re-conceptualize how university classrooms are designed.

Reference:

Schreiner, L. 2016. Thriving: expanding the goal of higher education. In D. W. Harvard (Ed.), *Well-being and Higher Education: a Strategy for Change and the Realization of Education's Greater Purposes*. (pp. 135-148). Washington D.C.: Bringing Theory to Practice.

English prof reimagines Shakespeare course using tools and spaces at Taylor Institute

Social media and digital technology in Michael Ullyot's course help students learn about focus as well as film and literary criticism

September 9, 2016

by Jessica Snow, University of Calgary

[Michael Ullyot](#) has a secret agenda. When the associate professor of English at the University of Calgary teaches his Shakespeare course, he's also trying to teach his students new skills for the digital age.

In a time when information is so readily available, he's trying to teach them how to really use the information they're taking in. "When you sign up for a Shakespeare course, you're signing up for a different kind of experience," explains Ullyot. "Part of that experience is at least committing to consider, practise and try out out the kinds of habits that lead to deep focus, insight and expertise. Information is wonderful, but knowledge is deeper. Information is what turns into knowledge if you give it enough time and enough focus."

Course taps into Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning

When Ullyot set out to design his Shakespeare and Film course, he knew that he had to address the armada of laptops and cellphones facing him at the start of every class. Rather than pretending it's still 1976, Ullyot has instead tried to harness the potential of the digital age. Using the capabilities of the [Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning](#), he's turned his [Shakespeare and Film course](#) into a Shakespeare and *Screens* course, which he'll be teaching again in fall of 2016.

Besides reading the original texts and watching the film adaptations, students work from one of six collaboration carts — 80-inch mobile displays — in the Taylor Institute's customizable forum. The forum has retractable seating that allows it to convert from a flat-floor learning space to a 340-seat lecture theatre. Cutting-edge audiovisual equipment and software allow students to connect to the collaboration carts through their smartphones, iPads and laptops. Once connected, students contribute to blogs, capture their research process, collaborate on documents and presentations, and essentially remain "plugged in" while engaging in the course.

Students assessed on their ability to create insights

"We use the screens to capture the stages of deeper activity — in this case film and literary criticism — by seeing ourselves as not just consumers of what comes to us on screen but as producers of what goes up on screen. Students in this course are being assessed on their ability to create insights and new artifacts that are going on screen."

He doesn't expect that students will ever give him their undivided attention, but he does expect them to be mindful of how they spend that limited resource. Since, as he says, "they'll be looking at their computer screens no matter what," Ullyot tries to harness the online platforms for something that he'll be assessing them on. Rather than pretending that students won't succumb to the lure of Facebook, Gawker or TMZ, he has instead set up a confessional and every 20 minutes he asks them to report on how they allocated their attention.

'Talk about focus, platforms, and distractions openly'

"Do they always 'fess up? Not necessarily," admits Ullyot, "but I guess the point is that if you induce a self-awareness and a deliberation to that choice, you can at least say you're making a deliberate choice to tune out for that minute, but now let's regroup and have a conversation about how we're allocating our attention during this

time and to what purpose. What are the benefits of focus? Talking about focus, platforms and distractions openly is the only way to do it.”

For the most part, Ulliyot says that students don’t resent the discussion about how they’re spending their attention because, as he puts it, there’s no stigma attached to it. Part of the class is actually teaching mindfulness about developing focus and being engaged in the material.

Ulliyot says that the digital age we live in isn’t a challenge but rather a fantastic opportunity that educators need to harness because the new “digital native” generation has the ability to make connections that previous generations could never fathom.

Digital natives have opportunities never seen before

“It’s too reactionary for us to wring our hands, to say that people are being superficial,” says Ulliyot. “The ability for people to have different streams of information coursing into their minds at once from different platforms is enviable in a hundred ways. It allows synaptic connections to be made between different media ... but with it is a loss of something.

"There are certain artifacts like a Shakespeare play, like a great work of art that demand deep attention — deep focus. I suppose what we’re really talking about is deliberating about how we allocate our attention and not just being reactive about what comes in.”

Apply now to teach in the Taylor Institute in winter 2017

Learning spaces at the Taylor Institute allow instructors to reimagine what a classroom can look like and how student learning can happen. In addition to the forum, the building has three flexible learning spaces that are equipped with fully mobile furniture that can be arranged in different configurations, 55-inch touch-screen collaboration carts, and innovative audiovisual technology.

The deadline to apply to teach in the Taylor Institute for winter 2017 is Sept. 30, 2016. [Application forms](#) can be found on the Taylor Institute [website](#). The institute has developed an application process for university course-based projects and convenes a Learning Spaces Committee to review applications.

- With files from Jessica Snow, Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning

From technophobe to technophile: Taylor Institute offers a unique blend of space, technology and community to all instructors

Apply by Feb. 17 to teach in the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning in spring/summer 2017

By Jessica Snow, Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning

January 27, 2017

Learning spaces at the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning offer technologies for all types of users.

For Faye Halpern, an associate professor in the Department of English, the flexible configuration of TI learning spaces encourages student participation.

The forum at the TI has retractable seating that allows it to convert from a flat-floor learning space (132 seats) to 340-seat public lecture space.

The most ingenious technologies are often the simplest. The wheel, for example, was likely invented in 3500 BC in Mesopotamia at the hands of an early potter. It later spread across the globe to revolutionize human transportation, agriculture and commerce. Several millennia later, the most important technology at the [Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning](#) would still be recognizable by the Neolithic Sumerian who invented it, where a single learning studio boasts over 335 wheels located on tables, chairs, screens, whiteboards and teaching stations.

This was the call to action for Faye Halpern, who teaches 19th-century American literature in the Department of English. “Almost every classroom that I’ve ever been offered has seating in rows and it’s very hard to get a good discussion going if the students can’t see each other,” says Halpern. “I was excited for the Taylor Institute, even just having the low-tech possibility of being able to have students sit in a horseshoe and see each other. You’re not locked into a given structure.”

Comfortable technology

When learning to use some of the other technologies available in the Taylor Institute, Halpern followed the advice of TI staff, “try just one thing you haven’t tried before.” They helped Halpern find Padlet, an annotation software, that helps to develop close reading skills and facilitates small group work when used on collaboration carts — 50” touch-enabled screens — located throughout the learning studios.

Sean Rogers from the Department of Biological Sciences notes, “the first time I entered the TI to visit the space and the technology I was really taken by how comfortable it felt, despite the high-tech. In his molecular ecology course, students have the opportunity to participate in a semester-long “field study” where they sample fish DNA (from markets and restaurants) and use DNA barcoding to ask the question, [Is the fish label consistent with the DNA barcode?](#) “Breakout spaces and conversation pods alongside interactive screens mean that students can get to the heart of the discussion in an easier way. It’s been great,” says Rogers.

Experiment with new teaching and learning approaches

Instructors who wish to teach a university course at the Taylor Institute are asked to submit an application form detailing what features of the learning spaces they are most interested in and how these features will help achieve the course’s learning goals. They will also be asked to share — formally or informally — what they have learned by teaching in TI learning spaces. These discoveries will help shape the design of future learning spaces on campus.

Find a teaching and learning community

Beyond the flexible spaces and streamlined technology, the Taylor Institute represents the teaching and learning community at the University of Calgary. Academic staff who teach university-level courses at the TI form part of

the Learning Spaces Community of Practice and are able to access the full range of support, workshops and activities that are offered by the Institute. The Taylor Institute also provides many other opportunities for knowledge sharing such as Lunch and Learns and the [University of Calgary Post-Secondary Conference on Learning and Teaching](#), among others.

More examples of university-level courses taught at the TI

- iProgramming for Creative Minds taught by Christian Jacob is a practical iOS programming course intended to provide advanced students in computer science with the necessary tools to prototype, design, and implement apps for iPhones and iPads. The class operates in a collaborative flipped course model, using the flexible layout and reconfigurable display hardware in the learning studios to create hubs for students to develop software in teams.
- Beginners Arabic taught by Asmaa Shehata utilizes workstations that support oral production tasks and productive teamwork skills. The project explores how experiential learning could be used to improve Arabic learners' performance, while students work in small teams to design, research and present on important cultural issues.
- The Discipline and Profession of Nursing III: Furthering Inquiry and Scholarship in Nursing taught by Linda Duffett-Leger and Sandra Goldsworthy, utilizes the modular set-up with technology at each cart, which is conducive to team-based learning (TBL). Using the TBL teaching approach, nursing students engage in a variety of experiential learning activities in the classroom. For instance, pre-recorded simulations (clinical scenarios) stream into the classroom, allowing students to apply their knowledge about nursing research while developing their clinical reasoning skills.

Friday, Feb. 17 deadline for spring/summer 2017 applications

The deadline to apply to teach in the Taylor Institute in spring/summer 2017 is Friday, Feb. 17. More information about TI spaces can be found at the [TI Learning Spaces website](#).

The online application form can be found [here](#).

'Anyone who walks into these spaces wants to teach in them'

Instructors can apply to teach in the Taylor Institute's flexible learning spaces

By Joni Miltenburg

April 19, 2016

The learning studio on the east side of the building. The room can be subdivided into two spaces, and all of the chairs, tables and screens are on wheels, so they can be arranged in any configuration.

Leighton Wilks found that teaching in an active learning space breaks down the boundary between instructor and student, and allows him to get to know his students better.

Sharaz Khan, instructor in the Haskayne School of Business, says a flexible space puts the focus on student learning.

Leighton Wilks noticed a palpable difference when his class moved from a traditional lecture-style classroom to an active learning space. Not only did attendance increase, but students were more engaged and collaborative.

"I see a lot more team cohesion. They're talking more to each other because they're sitting with their teams. It's nice to foster that teamwork throughout the semester."

Wilks is an instructor in the Haskayne School of Business and teaches a second-year organizational behaviour course in the newly-renovated active learning classroom in Scurfield Hall. He found that the space breaks down the boundary between instructor and student.

"Instead of being up at the front, I'm walking around. I feel I get a lot more questions and get to know the students better, which is important."

Taylor Institute's flexible learning spaces support experimentation

The newly opened [Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning](#) has several flexible learning spaces that are available to University of Calgary instructors to try different teaching and learning approaches. Instructors can [submit a brief application](#) outlining how they plan to use the space and how student learning will be enhanced. Applications to teach in the Taylor Institute in fall 2016 are due May 31.

Natasha Kenny, director of the Taylor Institute's Educational Development Unit, says the spaces will allow instructors to reimagine what a classroom can look like and how student learning can happen.

- **Read more:** [the announcement event](#), [the generous Taylor family donation](#), [the innovative architecture](#), and [how the new facility helps reimagine teaching and learning](#).

"Anyone who walks into these spaces wants to teach in them, because it challenges their notions of how they teach. There's a sense of unknown, where we don't quite know the potential of these spaces. They challenge us to think differently about where and how learning occurs."

The learning spaces are fully flexible; the tables, chairs, screens, whiteboards and instructors' stations are mobile and can be arranged in any configuration. Technology is seamlessly woven into the spaces to enrich learning.

Kenny notes that the spaces are also beautiful, with large windows and lots of natural light, something that is important to student well-being.

"It will be fun to learn in these spaces. This building will come to life with the spirit of inquiry and energy of learning."

Spaces allow instructors to research how students learn best

Instructors who teach in the building's learning spaces are asked to evaluate — formally or informally — the impact on student learning, and share what they learn with the University of Calgary community. The discoveries made in the Taylor Institute will influence the design of other learning spaces on campus.

For Sharaz Khan, teaching in a flexible space helps to focus students and reduces distractions. Khan teaches business technology management to second- and third-year students in an active learning classroom.

- **View videos:** Take a [time-lapse tour](#), and see how the institute [builds community and creates connections](#)

“The resources are there, the environment is there, all the tools you need are there, so the focus is on the learning and not the physical space,” he says. “It not only provides an environment that is learner focused, but it simulates the business world. It mimics how employees interact with one another in groups in a very collaborative manner.”

Khan acknowledges that teaching in a flexible space requires instructors to rethink their courses and how they teach, but says the effort is worth it.

“I had three students who switched from another discipline into business technology management because they thought that was the future of business and technology. And they prefaced their comments by saying this room had a positive impact on their learning. What more could I ask for?”

[Learn more](#) about the learning spaces in the Taylor Institute or to apply to teach there.

Exceptional architecture supports a very open teaching paradigm

Drop in and behold the Taylor Institute: Glass and light, flexible spaces, moveable walls, grid of screens and power outlets

By Jennifer Allford

April 19, 2016

The spine of the Taylor Institute projects 35 feet over the west entrance, where it supports a suspended amphitheatre.

University architect Jane Ferrabee stewarded the vision of the new Taylor Institute of Teaching and Learning, working with the architects, engineers and the construction company.

Light streams through the atrium in the new Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning, where pods float above and the amphitheatre begs one to study or have a chat.

An informal lounge area is located above the gallery.

The first thing that hits you when you enter the new Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning at the University of Calgary is a big sense of space and light. Look up to see study pods hanging above you. Turn around to see giant wooden stairs welcoming you to come and sit.

"I love the amphitheatre that's suspended over the west entry," says Jane Ferrabee, university architect. "The light that filters into that atrium and animates the student spaces is going to make these areas really desirable as collaboration spots on campus."

There is, it's safe to say, a lot to love about the new building.

Moveable walls can transform space to accommodate a range of different activities. The latest in screen technologies as well as a grid of data and power boxes let instructors manage a network of large monitors and other technologies from multiple points in the learning spaces — from the middle of a space or at the top, bottom or side of the room.

"The flexibility and transparency are really provocative," says Ferrabee.

Building on a vision of flexibility, collaboration and transparency

This innovative teaching and learning space was envisioned by a group of advisers, led by Lynn Taylor, vice-provost (teaching and learning), who imagined learning spaces characterized by flexibility, collaboration and transparency.

"They talked about where teaching and learning were going in the future and what they could use to push the edge," says Ferrabee, who was the steward of that vision with the architects, engineers and the construction company. "It was a really collaborative process, very dynamic."

The result is a very non-traditional and open learning environment. "It's a new paradigm for teaching — the experimenting will be on display!" says Ferrabee. "The articulation of that in architecture includes a lot of glass and the ability to drop in and watch teaching in action."

- **Read more:** the [announcement](#) event, the generous [Taylor family donation](#), how the new facility helps [reimagine teaching and learning](#), and what instructors say about [active learning spaces](#)

A 'nod' to the Nickle Arts Museum

The new structure includes the latest in efficient mechanical and plumbing systems. The wood used is certified by the [Forest Stewardship Council](#) and the landscaping will include local plants and grasses. The 4,000-square-metre building sits on the foundation of the former Nickle Arts Museum and has roughly the same dimensions. The new building contains "a nod" to the Nickle with its warm finishes but within a whole new form.

The Taylor Institute uses 71 per cent less energy than a conventional building of the same size. This was achieved using a variety of energy saving measures including high performance windows, LED lighting controlled by daylight sensors, low-flow hot water fixtures supplied by a high efficiency water heater, a well-insulated roof, radiant heating and cooling, and sourcing energy from the campus district energy plant.

"There is so much innovation in this building that we really debated what to call some of these spaces. They are so experimental," says Ferrabee. "It was so generous of the Taylors to fully fund the building. They allowed innovation. They allowed the architects to stretch. They allowed us to think big and I think the building is exquisite — in its form and in its function — as a result.

The new Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning is now open. The campus and general communities are invited to peruse, be inspired and enjoy this state-of-the-art learning space.

Innovative new facility at University of Calgary reimagines what it means to teach and learn

Taylor Institute helps instructors build their teaching and learning expertise, and share that knowledge with each other

By Drew Scherban

April 19, 2016

A series of hanging pods are suspended from the building's spine, serving as informal meeting spaces, work areas, or places to relax.

The atrium of the Taylor Institute is flooded with light from the large windows in the building's spine, which runs east to west across the building.

The forum has retractable seating that allows it to convert from a public lecture space to a flat-floor learning space.

The spine supports a conference room over the east doors of the building.

When it was first announced in 2013 that a state-of-the-art teaching and learning facility would be built on the University of Calgary campus, words like "innovative," "groundbreaking," and yes, "state-of-the-art" were used. But what does that actually look like?

It looks like a group of professors huddled around a table, tablets in hand, deeply engaged in conversation sharing thoughts and ideas on how students learn best.

It looks like a group of students participating in a thought-provoking discussion using instant messaging with their collective thoughts being projected onto a large screen.

It looks like learning spaces that are fully flexible: tables, chairs, screens, whiteboards and instructors' stations that can be arranged in any configuration.

It looks like [the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning](#), which opened on Monday, April 18.

Helping instructors build and share their teaching and learning expertise

Funded solely by a \$40-million donation from The Taylor Family Foundation, the Taylor Institute helps instructors build their teaching and learning expertise, and share that knowledge with each other. That collaboration between colleagues across campus will review and help strengthen the quality of the university's academic programs. It's this type of collaboration and interaction that Nancy Chick, University Chair in Teaching and Learning, and academic director, Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning, sees as being one of the most important roles that the Taylor Institute will play.

"Making teaching part of the conversation is critical, when you get instructors together to talk about teaching, those conversations are electric. They are so excited, they feed off each other. It's this type of interaction that allows instructors to learn from each other, work together to solve problems, and gain confidence to try new things."

It's this interaction between instructors that Chick sees as being extremely beneficial for the student. "See them, that's why we're here," she says as she motions to a group of students walking by the newly opened Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning. "We are always learning how to teach better and understand and improve student learning."

- **Read more:** [the announcement event](#), [the generous Taylor family donation](#), [the innovative architecture](#), and [what instructors say about active learning spaces](#)

Embrace technology, ask questions

In addition to facilitating the conversation between teachers, the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning will also allow for instructors to reimagine what a classroom can look like and how student learning can occur.

“For years, when conversations around teaching and learning were first happening, there was an apprehension by some to embrace technology,” says Chick. “Something seems different now. I’m noticing a sea of laptops in classrooms and they (students) seem to be transcribing every word. What kind of learning is happening? Rather than just ignore it or make assumptions, I can stop and say, What is going on? I want to understand.”

Learning spaces at the Taylor Institute are designed to promote instructors and students working together to learn from each other, start conversations, and solve problems. The transparent design of the learning spaces allows others to observe teaching in action and brings teaching into the open.

“That’s what I’m looking forward to, the journal clubs, the reading circles, the writing groups, and how the energy and the excitement and the commitment to those groups will spill over into the conversation,” says Chick.

The Taylor Institute will also be home to the College of Discovery, Creativity and Innovation. Through the CDCI, undergraduate students will have opportunities to engage in interdisciplinary research and experiential learning.

- **View videos:** [Take a time-lapse tour](#), and [see how the institute builds community and creates connections](#)

‘Help me understand qualities that I can then share with others’

When the doors swung open on the Taylor Institute, one of those most looking forward to immersing themselves in the enriched teaching learning environment is Jess Nicol, doctoral student and research assistant, Department of English.

Nicol has recently been named to [The Teaching Academy](#), a group of instructors who have received [University of Calgary Teaching Awards](#) and are committed to sharing their expertise with colleagues.

The Taylor Institute brings together people across campus to form a community for teaching and learning. It’s being a part of that larger community that allows for instructors such as Nicol to interact and engage. In the past, the opportunity might not have presented itself.

“If you have the resources on campus to teach people to be instructors, then there are going to be more people that will say, ‘I can actually do this’ or ‘Help me understand qualities that I can then share with others.’ The Taylor Institute is allowing people to enjoy the teaching process.”

Celebrating 50 years: Classrooms, then and now

Five decades of teaching and learning see a shift from blackboards and chalk to 3D technology

By Betty Rice

April 21, 2016

Technology used in classrooms and the overall look and feel of learning spaces at the University of Calgary have shifted dramatically over the last 50 years. In the top photo, visitors use large computers in the Math Department during an open house at the University of Calgary in 1973. Lower photo, students engage in collaborative conversation in a conference room at the new Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning, where personal laptops and tablets are the norm.

2016 marks 50 years of the University of Calgary being part of this vibrant, energetic city and we have a great deal to celebrate. Led by the Eyes High vision, we've become the top-ranked young university in Canada and North America. One of the significant changes over time has been the addition of technology in the classroom, but has the classroom experience changed? As we celebrate the opening of new Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning this week, we revisit the archives for photos of how the experience in the classroom has changed in five decades.

When you think of a classroom, what comes to mind? Rows of desks with the little writing surfaces that offer just enough space to scribble a bit in a notebook? The teacher at the front — a green or black chalkboard behind them? Possibly a pencil sharpener mounted on the wall? Each room looking pretty much the same as the next?

[Sharon Friesen](#), vice-dean in the [Werklund School of Education](#), remembers that sort of classroom well. She was an undergraduate student in education from 1982 to 1986 at the University of Calgary, and stayed on for both her master's and doctoral degrees. No doubt, she spent time in many of the classrooms seen in the photographs in the university archives that show an earlier period in teaching and learning.

But have they really changed that much? According to Friesen, when it comes to the look and feel of the traditional classroom, the answer is no.

“In our education block, for example, some rooms are still the same. Most of the science theatres haven't changed much either, and while the building is new and quite amazing, the science labs in [EEEL](#) don't seem to be much different from the labs of the 1980s.”

From typewriters and tape machines to SMARTboards and computer labs

One thing that has changed, says Friesen, as she glances at photos from a time gone by, is the technology.

Gone are the clunky, manual and later, electric typewriters, the television-monitor-videotape-recorder combination units, the reel-to-reel tape machines and the overhead projectors. Wait, not the overheads — they can still be found here and are still the favourite go-to equipment for quite a few professors. But now they are joined by SMARTboards, whiteboards, the occasional computer lab, laptops and tablets.

New Taylor Institute epitomizes connected and collaborative learning space

The other main change in post-secondary education, beyond the physical, is what has been realized in the areas of teaching and learning.

“We know that students need to know that their work makes a difference,” says Friesen. “The work has to be connected and collaborative. There needs to be a forum in which to express ideas and get feedback.

“Students need to be part of a deep and rich dialogue.”

Friesen says this week's opening of the [Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning](#) is a clear signal that the University of Calgary is taking a step towards presenting what classrooms and learning can, and should, look like.

"It's clear that what is needed is a cultural shift in our faculty members across this campus, and that's the vision of the Taylor Institute, that it will be able to help faculty move through this transition in teaching and learning," says Friesen. "At the opening, it was clear that this is Don Taylor's vision too."

'Creating learning environments that optimize learning'

"We put student success as a key element in our *Eyes High* strategy, and what I heard [at the Taylor Institute opening] is that we want our faculty members to be really strong in effective pedagogy, creating learning environments that optimize learning.

"The Taylor Institute signals a change in direction for post-secondary teaching and learning. Our obligation is to ensure we have highly educated citizens and workforce, and accepting that obligation is our responsibility," she says.

"Hopefully now we can get a critical mass to say that we are attending to all aspects of student learning."

The 50th Anniversary [website](#) contains a rich collection fascinating facts about our university's journey as well as archival photos, videos, and personal stories. Contribute your own UCalgary story there and remember to share it with your friends and family using the hashtag #ucalgary50.