

Teknion Case Study

client

City University of Seattle
Seattle, Washington

architect

CollinsWoerman

dealer

Office Max Workplace Interiors

products featured

Altos
District
Leverage
Expansion Training Tables
Fitz
Amicus
Tux Lounge
Ferrara Lounge
Sitara
Vignette Tables

The Project

As 21st century teaching and learning models transform higher education, the paradigm of campus design is also beginning to change. Classrooms are reinvented to address new student needs and expectations. Libraries are places for collaboration, as well as quiet study. Yet, in one area – the workspaces provided for support staff and faculty – tradition has remained firmly in place. City University of Seattle, taking a step forward, decided to see if alternative workplace models could better serve its educational mission.

Founded in 1973, CityU has engaged more than 50,000 alumni over its 40-year history and is an affiliate of the largest private non-profit university system in the United States: the National University System. Originally, CityU occupied several dispersed buildings in Bellevue, Washington, but recently opened an innovative new campus at 6th and Wall Street in Seattle's Belltown neighborhood. The campus comprises 100,000 square feet on two floors of a three-story building and serves 3,500 local students, plus some 8,000 students who study online or at other campuses.

CityU's campus and international headquarters features 19 interactive and live-streaming classrooms, 21 interactive conference rooms and a conference center. A library and resource center is outfitted with computers, collaborative rooms and private study booths. Technology is fully integrated to connect the school's international partners, faculty and students in North America, Asia, Europe and Australia.

The new Seattle campus reflects a thoughtful design process. "We took time," says Christopher Ross, Vice President for University Advancement, "to consider the specific objectives that our new headquarters should serve. We wanted to convey CityU's global presence, its values and mission. We also wanted to break down silos between departments, to project a sense of accessibility and to arrive at a scalable solution, able to adapt to change."

What sort of provision for faculty and staff would best serve those goals? Finding an answer proved to be somewhat daunting. Vice President Ross notes that, "While there are examples of alternative student spaces to study and evaluate, we found no university that had embraced an open plan for its faculty and staff. There were many questions for which we could find no proof points. Would the open plan compromise one's ability to do focused work? Would it cause problems in meeting with students?"

Hoping to dispel the myths that surround open plans and private offices, CityU conducted interviews to ascertain how faculty and staff worked, which pieces of furniture they felt were key to being effective and efficient, and what features they expected to keep. The CityU project team also accepted Teknion's invitation to tour Seattle sites that had implemented innovative workplace products, including the offices of Russell Investments. Russell Investments had achieved a successful benching plan with Teknion's Marketplace product.



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“All of this gave us confidence,” says Ross, “as we considered what might be sacrificed, how interactions would be enhanced or impeded, and even the laws surrounding issues of privacy and confidentiality.” Ultimately, CityU moved 176 individuals into low-height cubicles in an open plan. University executives were given offices with glass walls without doors. Unlike the usual “mahogany row” of academia, the offices are open and accessible, expressing CityU’s ethos of access and transparency, whether the concepts are applied to pedagogy or school administration.

The Response

Impressed by Teknion’s furniture solution for Russell Investments, CityU looked to Teknion to provide affordable furniture that would support a flexible and highly collaborative environment.

Altos and Optos architectural walls were specified to define space and provide acoustic privacy for executive offices. As a modular wall system, Altos would also facilitate cost-effective reconfiguration should the school’s needs change in future. Optos glass walls provide a seamless transparency that projects the accessibility desired – and takes advantage of daylight flowing into the interior of the building via a glass-roofed atrium.

Teknion’s District product was chosen to furnish senior executive offices. District’s lightly scaled workstations and overlapping surfaces provide optimal use of space, while refined materials and finishes contribute to an aesthetic appropriate to the status of the university’s senior officers.

Designed to accommodate diverse needs and encourage collaboration, low-height Leverage workstations were specified for academic support personnel and teaching staff. The greater sense of openness and visibility encourages faculty members to converse frequently and spontaneously, thus facilitating the exchange of ideas that will lead to better ways of teaching and learning. Enclaves are provided for private meetings between staff members or between teachers and students.

Teknion provided CityU with several seating products to fulfill the needs of people in different settings, including Fitz task chairs for the executive offices and Amicus and Sitara seating for staff workstations. Tux lounge seating was specified for casual reading rooms. In the lobby, Ferrara lounge seating and Vignette coffee tables create a welcoming atmosphere.

The result? Christopher Ross reports that anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that students, faculty and staff deem the new headquarters design a success. Occupants of the second floor have found that the open plan creates energy and promotes mobility and communication. “The response has been very positive. In fact, we expect that our people may request even lower workstation walls than we have now. Often, there is resistance at first – followed by a wholehearted embrace of a more open and fluid environment. With the support of OM and Teknion, we have reached all of our stated goals. The new design is exemplary.”



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Featured Products

Altos

Altos® is a modular, full-height architectural wall system that can be reconfigured or relocated as an organization evolves. A sleek European aesthetic harmonizes with modern building architecture and integrates with a variety of furniture products.

District

District® is a unique furniture system that combines the attributes of classic furniture with the functionality of systems. District desks, bookcases and cabinets look and feel like real furniture. Refined materials, finishes and details create an aesthetic of quiet elegance appropriate throughout the office environment.

Leverage

Leverage® is a panel-based furniture system that makes it easy to customize the office, allowing designers and facility managers to specify the desired level of features for each workspace in order to meet diverse needs, while achieving a crisp, clean look at an affordable price.

Expansion Training Tables

A series of simple, interacting worksurfaces and tables, Expansion® Training Tables are offered in a variety of sizes and shapes that can be linked together or used as freestanding worktables. Worksurfaces can be specified with fixed-height or height-adjustable legs. Tables are available in Flip-Top, Crank Adjustable and Folding models.

Fitz

Fitz™ is a high-performance task chair based on the principle of fit. Specifically designed to address global ergonomic guidelines based on the size, weight and proportions of the body, Fitz translates the demanding dimensional requirements into a broad range of adjustability for almost every body type.

Amicus

Amicus® is a family of ergonomic seating designed to function for any task or office setting. Highly adjustable, Amicus offers multiple enhanced ergonomic features based on how people sit and move over the course of a day. The line includes task seating, a general-use chair and a guest chair with three leg styles.

Tux Lounge

Tux Lounge seating is a classic collection designed for reception areas, the private executive office and casual meeting spaces. The collection encompasses a lounge chair and two- or three-seat sofas with loose back and seat cushions enclosed by an upholstered frame.

Ferrarra Lounge by Leif Jacobsen

A chair with a high degree of drama and personality, Ferrarra® seating collection simultaneously spans past and present with a unique style compatible with a wide range of residential and business interior styles.

Sitara

A simple, crisp design makes Sitara™ an ideal side chair for application in offices, cafeterias, boardrooms, meeting and training rooms. Sitara is light-weight and comfortable, featuring a padded upholstered seat and back.

Vignette Tables

The Vignette™ collection includes round and square coffee tables with a chrome cylindrical base and tops, with various surface materials including Marble, Solid Surface, Natural Veneer, Flintwood and Seamless Color.