Instructional Space Study

Executive Summary

Background

During the 2008-2009 academic year, the Classroom Readiness Committee contracted with Ira Fink and Associates to conduct a comprehensive study of the classroom environments on campus. The study looked at classroom utilization data for classroom pool spaces, departmentally owned classrooms and class laboratories. The consultants met with various offices on campus that support instruction and instructional spaces and also conducted a series of open forums with faculty, staff, and students. Additionally, a survey of faculty and instructional staff was conducted to asses the current state of the spaces on campus.

General Observations

A focus of the study was whether or not Ohio State has an appropriate number of classrooms and whether or not we are using those efficiently in order to provide the most appropriate level of access to courses for students.

The study found that in general, Ohio State does have the appropriate number of rooms relative to student to station and student to room ratios. We are in line with other institutions of similar size. However, for Ohio State, in order to achieve those comparable ratios, the totals must include both classroom pool rooms and departmentally managed rooms. While as a whole, Ohio State has the appropriate number of classrooms, there are significant opportunities to use those rooms more efficiently and to increase access to courses.

The following recommendations were presented by Ira Fink and Associates as areas in which Ohio State can improve the quality, management, and availability of instructional spaces on campus.

Management

- Consolidate the various operational areas that deal with classrooms and their support into a single classroom management office.
- Provide the classroom management office a level of visibility on campus through reporting lines that it raises the significance of instructional spaces on campus.
- Provide a level of sustained funding appropriate to support the classrooms and classroom technology that is aligned with the level of excellence expected.
- Models should be developed to define the specific classroom needs in a semester system in order to develop polices and strategies to meet the needs of instructional units in a semester system and achieve use and utilization goals.

- Develop a set of instructional facilities design guidelines that define specific criteria for various types of classrooms in order to manage differences between architects, contractors, vendors, and project managers.

Scheduling and Utilization

- Address the deficiency of classroom spaces with occupancy above 300 seats with an immediate need for a space at approximately 350 seats and approximately 500 seats. This may involve new construction but more likely may be achieved by repurposing existing spaces not dedicated to the classroom pool.
- Begin scheduling departmentally managed classrooms using the centralized scheduling database (Peoplesoft).
- Develop strategies to more frequently use departmentally owned classroom spaces during times of the day or week they are currently unused.
- Use and utilization goals and guidelines should be applied across all instructional spaces on campus regardless of departmental or central ownership.
- Provide opportunities for departments to turn management and assignment of rooms over to classroom pool when appropriate to increase the number of centrally managed classrooms.
- Reduce the number of courses that are placed into classroom pool rooms without using bulk scheduling software.
- Priority should be given to courses who an individual classroom space most efficiently through the week, followed by combinations of courses submitted by the same department that use the space most efficiently during a given time.
- More closely monitor and enforce existing classroom use and utilization polices to spread courses through the day and week and achieve maximum seat utilization in each room.
- Sections of courses should not be placed in classrooms with 0 anticipated enrollment as placeholders for additional sections. Any course that is scheduled into a classroom pool space should be open for enrollment. Sections added later in the scheduling process should be placed into classrooms at that time.

Communication & Feedback

- Centralize information about classrooms and classroom management into a single website with appropriate links to outside resources.
- Provide single email, phone, and web support line for all issues related to classroom pool spaces.
- Regularly survey instructional staff and faculty about the classrooms in which they have taught.
- Develop regular classroom inspection process in which each room is visually inspected by an Office of Classroom Management staff member at least twice per week.

Classroom Technology

- The University should dedicate resources to complete the installation of technology into 100% of the classroom pool spaces.
- Develop a uniform standard of technology in each room that uses the same user interface to make a move from room to room seamless for an instructor.
- As new rooms are added to the classroom pool, they should be equipped with technology.
- More central spaces of varying sizes should be equipped with technology and logistics to support distance learning.
- Provide more centralized support of distance learning including spaces that support lecture capture and interactive distance learning.

Classroom Placement and Design Strategy

- As actions are taken as result of the Sasaki study to reallocate how space on campus is used, consider consolidation of classrooms into fewer buildings such that there is a critical mass of space to allow for efficient support.
- As the Sasaki study reviews space on campus, special attention should be paid to the unscheduled instructional lab space to determine whether individual spaces are used efficiently and if they may play a role in scheduled instructional lab shortages on campus.
- Consider the location of student traffic when adding new classroom facilities.
- Departmental ownership of instructional spaces (excluding lab spaces) should be discouraged in the conduction and renovation of buildings on campus.
- Move away from fixed furnishings in classrooms and provide more flexible furniture to provide an opportunity for more interactive learning.
- Create more non-scheduled informal instructional spaces that are appropriately equipped and available for small group projects and informal instructional opportunities.