

Sustaining Teaching and Research Task Force (START)

START Committee(s): Optimizing Our Facilities

Date: March 2025

Recommendation: Transparent Space Utilization

UC Davis has more than 12 million square feet of space including offices, research space, classrooms, libraries, labs and many outlying field and other buildings. All University of California property is owned by the Regents and managed at the individual campus level. At UC Davis, space is allocated by the Provost to Colleges and Administrative Units who then allocate the space to departments within their unit. Many faculty and staff feel a great sense of ownership over their assigned space, but it is a University resource.

According to our space database, FacilitiesLink, all space is allocated and in use. Currently there is no way to determine if the space is active or sitting empty. Based on observations from the Space Management team and others, spaces throughout some buildings appear underutilized. It may be assigned to a department, but it is either empty or being used for a purpose it was not designed for, i.e. lab space being used for storage. Frequently there are reasons for this space to be unused: it could need repair or renovation, it could be in reserve for future recruits, or there could be another future plan for its use. The challenge with the current approach is that it is unclear what the intentions are, how the space is actually being used, who the space is used by, and what potential there may be for changes.

The management and utilization of space tends to be delegated to departments and is opaque to others outside of the department, including often their unit's leadership (Deans, Vice Chancellors, etc.). This makes it challenging to understand how space is being used and ensure all campus needs are being met. Achieving greater transparency into space utilization across the campus can help ensure more strategic planning is happening, potentially save costs and optimize for all the use of this highly valuable resource.

Recommendation:

Require all departments and space managers across campus to accurately report how their space is used in the FacilitiesLink database.

Space Management, a unit within Design and Construction Management (DCM), is responsible for managing the FacilitiesLink database. This is the system of record for all physical building facilities on campus. Space data is required to be reported to UCOP annually in aggregate as well as through a variety of other reports, including educational space use. Under the current process each department assigns a space manager who is responsible for keeping the database accurate on at least an annual basis. They are only required to update department assignment

and room use. There is also a field for the description of the room, but that is not always filled out.

The proposal is that every unit be required to add the description information and keep it updated on an annual basis. This would need to include the name of an individual assigned to an office or lab. In the case of space that is not assigned to an individual, its purpose would need to be identified, i.e. calling out spaces coded under Office Service as break room, mail room, hoteling space, etc. Space Management, in consultation with campus constituents, would develop standard ways of filling this field to ensure clarity and searchability. The Chemistry department is one excellent example of a department that has implemented this practice. They have found that their faculty and staff appreciated having greater understanding of their space use and that it has led to better space decision making.

Some departments already include this information in FacilitiesLink, but many do not. The initial input of this data could be quite time-consuming for some units. Some maintain the data internally but not in the FacilitiesLink system. For the initial input, the recommendation is that Space Management hire student assistants to help with the initial reporting of this data. In future years, space managers will be responsible for the upkeep. In past years, space managers were more active in FacilitiesLink, doing regular updates and informing Space Management of floor plan changes. If there are reasons why people aren't doing the updates (staffing, duplication of systems, fear of reallocation of space), we need to understand those and address them.

Rationale:

-What are you trying to address or fix?

Space is a finite resource, but with better knowledge and greater transparency, we can utilize our existing space resources and serve our entire campus better. We need to communicate that keeping accurate space records demonstrates good stewardship of this valuable resource. We already have a space management platform, FacilitiesLink, in use at UC Davis since 2006. It connects a physical space (a room) to information about that space and a location on a floor plan. It represents the room in the context of the rest of the organization. We need to emphasize why it is important to represent space accurately in the system and provide assistance and training.

Improved understanding of campus space (what we have and how it is utilized) will improve project planning. In the lead-up to the AB94 Seismic project, the Space Management team uncovered many rooms classified inaccurately or descriptions of rooms that were incomplete. For example, they found that rooms classified as conference rooms were being used for regularly scheduled instruction. In another case, there were rooms classified as Office Service space that were supporting essential research functions. Many rooms are used for multiple functions, which is also important information.

The current financial outlook is challenging. We have long lists of deferred maintenance and infrastructure needs. We lack the funds to build new buildings or lease space when needed. We have transitioned departments out of off-campus leases, and it is critical that we use our on-campus space responsibly. Additionally having accurate information regarding current use as well as future plans will help departments and the University as a whole better plan for future needs and meet the current demands for space.

Alternatives Considered:

Capturing correct building and room use data is currently a hot topic for space planners in both the private and public sectors of business. Even pre COVID, companies were recognizing the importance of maximizing space use and downsizing square footage when necessary for cost savings. The concept of hoteling space or neighborhood hot desking has been the topic of many presentations and roundtable discussions at universities throughout the country.¹

When the COVID pandemic hit, the university encouraged flexible work arrangements where faculty and staff could work part of the week at a home office. Post COVID, a lot of university departments continue to have flexible work arrangements. To maximize space utilization for flexible work arrangements, the university needs to have reliable data so units can determine how to make informed decisions on space sharing and how much space is actually needed.

Space Walk Audits: This is the current method used by the Space Management Team. It is a very reliable method for capturing information at a moment in time. However, what is observed on the walks can change immediately. On these space walks, the Space Management Team finds issues that need to be addressed, but it's all observation and there is no data to show the actual room use like occupants walking through doors and/or sitting in chairs. A downside to this method is it is prone to dispute by departments. Having departments responsible for self-reporting within FacilitiesLink, will aid in partnership to best understand utilization.

The Space Management Team is currently working on implementing before and after space walk interviews to get a better understanding of room use once they have made observations on the walks and then working with the units to better define what high and low room use really is.

Status Quo: The current method of managing FacilitiesLink leaves a lot of variation between how departments report their space allocations and use. Moving to a similar methodology for all department reporting will lead to a more reliable and accurate accounting of how space is allocated and where the most urgent needs and opportunities are.

¹ Hoteling space is defined as a desk or workstation that is not assigned to any one person and can be reserved ahead of time for working in the office. Neighborhood hot desking is an area within a department that anyone can use on a first come first served basis. **For the purpose of this report, the term "hoteling space" will be used for desk space that is not assigned and is open for use by anyone in a defined area.**

Summarize consultation process:

Members of the Optimizing Our Facilities: Office Space

Tammy Booker – Director of Space Management and Project Initiation

Jim Carroll – Former Associate Vice Chancellor and University Architect (since departed UC Davis)

Julie Nola – Associate Vice Chancellor & University Architect

Brian Hodge – University Registrar

John Marx – Vice Provost, Aggie Square

Josh Morejohn – Manager, Facilities Management

Jennifer Sang – Executive Assistant Dean, Finance and Administration, College of Biological Sciences

Campus and System Wide Contacts who helped with recommendation:

Teri Greenfield, UC Davis, Capital Project Analyst

UC San Diego Space Management and Planning Team

UC Berkeley María García-Álvarez

UC Systemwide space planner meetings

Vendors:

Office trends: *Tradeline: Facility Planning and Management*

OCCUSPACE, Lambent and other occupancy tracking vendors

Fiscal Implications, Costs, and Return on Investment:

One time costs:

The Space Management Team would like to hire two students with a data sciences emphasis for one year to help work with departments to gather and enter correct information into FacilitiesLink. The Library is interested in helping to consult on this effort.

Workload impacts on the Space Management Team:

The Space Management team routinely does campus building space walks and then issues a report to building occupants. For a two-year period, the Space Management Team will pivot and work with CAOs and other campus leaders, to gather information to be entered into FacilitiesLink and then use electronic data to determine room use with two students to help manage the tasks (it should not be a strain).

Intended Impact and Benefits:

If the campus implements the room assignment feature in FacilitiesLink, the Space Management Team and campus leadership will have a better understanding and knowledge to make informed decisions on lab, office, and classroom spaces across campus. There are always challenges when departments need access to space that they do not already have allocated to them. With greater transparency of space assignments and use, there may be opportunities for

departments to share space on occasion without having to “own” space. This could help with one time uses such as departmental conferences or seminars. Additionally, there could be opportunities to help alleviate schedule challenges for classes or other larger meetings. Having greater transparency also helps space not be a secret and could help broaden understanding of what is happening across campus. An ideal outcome would be for this type of transparency to lead to greater collegiality and collaboration and reduce feelings of scarcity.

Challenges to implementing the recommendation:

Cultural Shift:

Across the UC Davis campus there is a very strong affection and ownership entitlement to space. Even space that greatly needs refresh is viewed as too valuable to release. Once a department is allocated space, whether in a new building or an existing building, it is viewed as a permanent departmental possession. Senior leadership will need to reshape the concept of department ownership of space to that of a campus asset evaluated on the basis of centralized data.

When wet lab spaces were needed to support the campus AB94 Seismic Project, many empty labs were identified in several different buildings. In order to encourage the departments to lend the space for campus temporary use², the departments were incentivized by offering refresh money so that after the AB94 Seismic Project was completed, the labs would be returned refreshed. If the campus can move away from the ownership mentality and work towards “what are the space needs of the campus” and manage it responsibly, there could be an increase in available space.

Next Steps for Implementation:

Implement FacilitiesLink centralized data concept and start meeting with departments to gather the information. Departments will be required to include data down to the individual PI or staff member name in offices, labs and other similar areas. Incentivize initial information gathering by offering space refreshes and/or funding from the [Supply Chain Management’s AggieSurplus Heroes \(SMASH\)](#) program. After the initial push to update the records, departments will be required to maintain the information annually. Through the initial phases of updating the records, it will be important to determine barriers to compliance and find ways to help ease the burden, such as continuing to provide student help. A standardized consequence for non-compliance may also need to be established, for example updated FacilitiesLink data may be needed in order to file budgets or hiring plans.

² The labs were needed for occupants that needed to vacate wet labs in Young from L&S Departments and Sprocket A&ES. The labs identified are in Wickson and fall under A&ES inventory. In total, six underutilized lab or lab support rooms in Wickson were refreshed.