



## FACILITIES & MAINTENANCE

PHOTO COURTESY MARCO GROUP

# Great Campuses Don't Begin with Furniture. They Begin with Intention.

BY LIBBY FERIN

Furniture isn't the finish line of a project. It's the beginning of every experience that follows.

Before the professor says a word...Before students open a laptop...Before the first discussion begins...The environment has already started teaching.

Without saying anything at all, the environment communicates expectations. It tells students whether this is a place to listen or participate. Whether collaboration is encouraged or independent focus is expected. Whether movement is welcome or staying put is the norm. Every space teaches. The question is whether it's teaching intentionally.

For decades, conversations about educational furniture have centered on specifications, finishes, budgets, and lead times. Those are all important considerations, but they aren't where great learning environments begin. They begin with a much simpler question. "What is this space designed to do?" Not just on opening day. Not just this semester. But throughout its life.

As campuses evolve, programs expand, technology changes, and teaching methods continue to transform, can this environment continue to support the people who rely on it every day? That question changes everything. Because once purpose becomes the starting point, furniture stops being a purchase and becomes part of the learning strategy.

## Every Space Has a Job

Higher education campuses are unlike almost any other environment. Within a single day, one building may support lectures, seminars, independent study, faculty collaboration, research, student services, social interaction, and community events. A student commons may be a quiet study lounge at 9:00 a.m., a bustling gathering space by noon, and an evening event venue just hours later. A classroom may shift from lecture to collaborative learning several times before the day is over. Libraries have become destinations for teamwork as much as independent study. Makerspaces encourage experimentation. Music facilities require organization, accessibility, and protection for valuable equipment while maximizing instructional time.

Every one of those spaces serves a different purpose. Yet too often, institutions begin by asking what furniture belongs in the room instead of what the room is meant to accomplish. The question facilities leaders should be asking isn't, "What furniture belongs here?" It's "What behaviors should this environment encourage?" Because behavior is ultimately what learning environments are designed to support.

## The Hidden Curriculum of Space

Educational researchers have long understood something many people overlook: The environment influences behavior.

At Marco, working alongside internationally recognized educational consultant Dr. Lennie Scott-Webber, we've seen firsthand that the most successful learning environments begin with understanding people before products. How do students move through a room? Where do conversations naturally happen? What encourages participation? What reduces stress? What helps people focus? These aren't abstract design questions. They're practical ones.

The shape of a table influences conversation. The layout of a room influences interaction. Mobility encourages adaptability. Comfort supports concentration. Choice encourages ownership.

Even subtle design decisions communicate how people are expected to use a space. The environment is constantly teaching. The most successful campuses recognize that—and design accordingly.

## The Research Is Clear

The evidence is no longer anecdotal. Decades of environmental psychology, neuroscience, and educational research continue to point to the same conclusion: space influences behavior, and behavior influences outcomes.

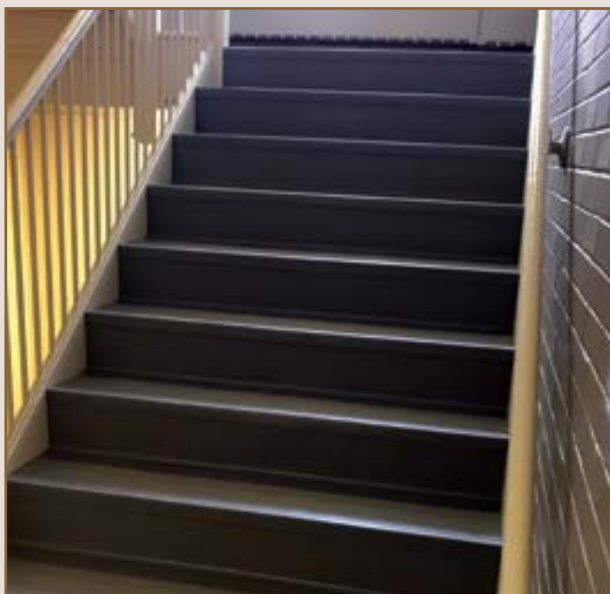
One of the most widely referenced studies in educational design, the University of Salford's HEAD Project, found that classroom design accounted for up to 16 percent of the variation in student learning progress.

*continued...*

pupnmag.com

# VINYL STAIR TREADS & LANDING TILES

## MAKE STAIRS AND LANDINGS SAFE WITH MUSSON VINYL TREADS AND TILE



- Excellent for commercial, industrial and institutional use
- Vinyl treads are available in four colors and a variety of sizes and styles
- Contrasting 18" x 18" vinyl tiles have a durable 40 mil wear layer



- Matching cove risers are also available

*Visit our website for additional information  
or to request samples and literature.*



**MUSSON RUBBER CO.**

P.O. Box 7038 • Akron, Ohio 44306  
800-321-2381 • Fax 330-773-3254  
[info@mussonrubber.com](mailto:info@mussonrubber.com) • [www.mussonrubber.com](http://www.mussonrubber.com)

**Think about that for a moment.**

If a curriculum improvement demonstrated a 16 percent impact on learning, educators would pay attention. If a new instructional strategy consistently moved student outcomes by that amount, institutions would invest in it. Yet the physical environment—where learning happens every single day—is often treated as the final purchasing decision instead of an educational strategy.

Research continues to reinforce that students perform best when learning environments provide comfort, accessibility, visibility, movement, and opportunities for both collaboration and focused individual work.

Just as important is choice and control. When students can choose where and how they work—whether it's a quiet corner for concentration, a collaborative table for problem-solving, or an informal space for discussion—they become more engaged in the learning process. Research in neuroscience and educational psychology continues to show that learner choice and agency strengthen attention, motivation, memory, and long-term retention. Simply put, when students have greater

ownership over their learning environment, they are more likely to engage deeply with the work taking place within it.

The goal isn't simply flexibility. It's creating environments that give people the freedom to learn the way they learn best.

**Flexibility Isn't Furniture on Casters**

"Flexible learning" has become one of higher education's favorite phrases. But flexibility isn't measured by how easily a table rolls across the floor. Real flexibility begins with intentionality. Can the room support multiple teaching styles? Can students quickly transition from lecture to collaboration? Can the environment evolve without replacing everything five years from now? Can faculty teach differently tomorrow than they do today?

Those are the questions that matter. Furniture should never dictate how learning happens. It should quietly support whatever the moment requires. The best environments don't force people to adapt to the furniture. The furniture adapts to the people.

**From K to Gray**

One way to think about this philosophy is "K

to Gray." Over decades of serving educational environments, we've discovered something surprisingly simple. The context of learning changes. Human behavior doesn't. Whether we're designing for a first grader, a doctoral candidate, or an adult learner returning to the classroom, the goal is remarkably consistent: create environments where people feel comfortable, capable, connected, and ready to learn.

While the context evolves, the fundamental needs of learners do not.

**Partnership Doesn't Begin at Installation**

Ask any facilities professional what keeps projects from opening on time, and the answer is rarely furniture. Until suddenly it is. Construction schedules move. Shipments are delayed. Specifications change. Manufacturers miss commitments. Occupancy dates don't. Those are the moments that define partnerships.

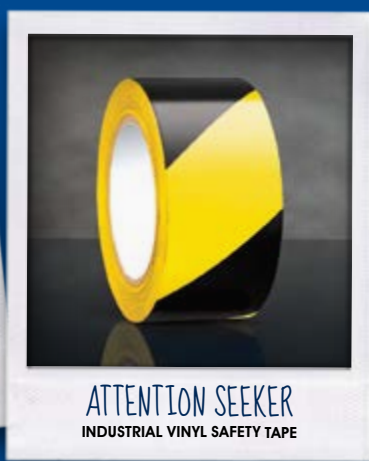
In our experience, many of the strongest customer relationships begin with a simple phone call: "Can you help?" Sometimes we're asked to solve a problem another

*continued...*

# ULINE

## TOP-OF-CLASS TAPE

THE BEST SELECTION – ALWAYS IN STOCK



ORDER BY 6 PM FOR SAME DAY SHIPPING

1-800-295-5510

uline.com



# Harness the power of soy beans for your renovations

- Low Odor
- Low VOC
- Non-caustic
- Ideal for working in occupied areas

**Franmar.com • 1-800-538-5069**

manufacturer couldn't. Sometimes a timeline has unexpectedly compressed. Sometimes a project simply needs a partner willing to respond quickly, communicate honestly, and work toward a solution. Responsiveness isn't a customer service initiative. It's part of our culture.

Because when a building is preparing to open, students aren't thinking about furniture. They're thinking about the semester ahead. Faculty are preparing lessons. Facilities teams are working tirelessly to cross the finish line. Our responsibility is to help them get there.

### Relationships Outlast Projects

The best partnerships aren't measured by purchase orders. They're measured by trust. Installation may complete a project, but it should begin a relationship—one built on responsiveness, collaboration, and a shared commitment to creating environments where students and educators can succeed.

Many of the institutions we serve first found us because they needed someone willing to step in, solve a challenge, and deliver on a

promise. They stayed because they discovered something different. A team that answers the phone. People who communicate honestly. A manufacturer that understands educational environments—not just educational furniture.

The strongest partnerships rarely begin with perfect circumstances. More often, they begin with someone needing help. Over time, those projects become relationships built on trust, responsiveness, and shared success. The best partners aren't remembered simply for the products they delivered—they're remembered for how they showed up when it mattered most. Relationships outlast projects. That's how trust is built.

### Begin with Purpose

Higher education continues to evolve. Teaching methods will change. Technology will advance. Programs will grow. Student expectations will continue to shift. The campuses best prepared for that future won't simply have newer furniture. They'll have environments intentionally designed to support the people using them.

The next time your institution begins planning a classroom, library, commons, makerspace, or learning environment, start with one question. What should this space accomplish? Everything else follows.

Before the professor says a word...Before students open a laptop...Before learning begins...The environment has already started teaching.

That's why the question isn't, "What furniture should we buy?" It's, "What should this space help people achieve?" Because great campuses don't begin with furniture. They begin with intention.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Libby Ferin leads marketing at Marco Group, bringing expertise in customer engagement and strategic communications to strengthen relationships, elevate brand experiences, and drive growth.

## Building or renovating a gymnasium?



Call the design experts at IPI by Bison at 800-637-7968 for premium custom ceiling and wall mounted basketball backstops, divider curtains, wall padding and gym accessories.

IPI by Bison projects include quality Bison sports equipment!



Divider Curtains & Batting Cages



Ceiling & Floor Mounted Volleyball Systems



Wall Padding



Ceiling & Wall Mounted Backstops



REQUEST A QUOTE



Competition Basketball Portables

**THE EXCLUSIVE NFHS PARTNER FOR BASKETBALL EQUIPMENT**

SLX-D+ Wireless Systems

SHURE SLXD4+

IR

rec  
Shure 1  
C: 01  
AUDIO RF

# SET CONFIDENCE TO AUTOMATIC.

Unpredictable conditions. Quirky venues. Congested spectrum.

Sometimes the deck is stacked against quality audio.

That's why the SLX-D+ Wireless System adds advanced features that make great sound simpler than ever.

With wide tuning bands for more clear channels, feedback-reducing DSP, and Showlink® Ease to manage everything efficiently, it's a plus for any production.

[Shure.com/slxplus](https://www.shure.com/slxplus)

© 2026 Shure Incorporated.  
See [shure.com/trademarks](https://www.shure.com/trademarks).

SHURE

AUGUST 2026 33



**KENYON**  
CERAMIC GLASS  
COOKTOPS  
Since 1931

SMART BUILT-IN SAFETY FOR  
THE USER AND FACILITY



CHILD SAFETY  
LOCK-OUT WITH  
AUTO SHUT-OFF



HEAT LIMITING  
COOKING SURFACE  
PROTECTORS



MEETS ADA  
REQUIREMENTS  
INCLUDING CA & TX

CONTACT US FOR SPECIAL PRICING:  
WWW.COOKWITHKENYON.COM | 860.664.4906



# FiDO

## Fire Damper Opener

- NFPA requires all fire dampers to be tested 1 year after installation and every 4 - 6 years thereafter (depending on the building type).
- Resetting fire dampers by hand after a test has been performed can be an unsafe, difficult, and time-consuming process.
- FiDO Fire Damper Openers help make this process safer and easier, while also saving significant time and money.




**Available@hvacjack.com**



## AMERICAN SLIP METER®

SLIP AND FALL PREVENTION SINCE 1993

**SALES, SERVICE & RENTALS OF SCOF & DCOF TRIBOMETERS**



**ASM 925**

Our ASM 925DCOF meter is perfect for the new NFPA B101.4-2023 wet barefoot testing standard. Our 925 is an NFPA Approved Tribometer for DCOF testing. Our 925 is, also, an automated DCOF meter that tests to NFPA B101.3 and ANSI A326.3. No drive wheels to slip on ramps, bathtubs or grout lines. Test stairs in four directions.

---

Our 825A is an economical manual SCOF meter that tests to ANSI/NFPA B101.1-2009 Easy to operate for both dry and wet tests. Used across the globe for many years.



**825A**

**For more information on both meters visit**  
**www.americanslipmeter.com**

Questions? Contact us at  
info@americanslipmeter.com or 941-681-2431



## EARLY WARNING WATER LEAK DETECTION

*Installed in over 23,000 sites!*

**CEILING GUARD®**



**WATER ALERT®**

**WATER ALERT®**

**WATER ALERT® SENSOR CABLE**



- 5 Year Warranty
- Made in the USA
- In Business 40+ Years
- Ultra High Quality

**DORLEN Products Inc.**  
**1-800-533-6392**  
**WWW.WATERALERT.COM**

# We're Still Listening.

**Water professionals know** that swimmers demand clear and clean water. That's why we continue to work hard to make your job easier. Make chlorination easy with the **ACF Series** Calcium Hypochlorite Feeders.

**Clarify with Vantage Poly-A Clarifying Tablets.** This unique and powerful tablet water clarifier is not just to clear up cloudy water after a long weekend. As a maintenance product, it works with your filtration system to remove organic and inorganic compounds to prevent dull and cloudy water.

## SANITIZE with the **ACF Series** Calcium Hypochlorite Tablet Feeders

- ⌘ Safer than liquid systems
- ⌘ Runs "Clean" - Less Maintenance!
- ⌘ Simple, Efficient, and Durable
- ⌘ Systems available for ANY size pool
- ⌘ NSF/ANSI Standard 50 Certified

## CLARIFY with the **VPF-20** Poly-A Tablet Feeder

- ⌘ Unique tablet clarifier
- ⌘ Easier than liquid systems
- ⌘ Removes organic and inorganic compounds
- ⌘ Increases filter effectiveness
- ⌘ Proven cryptosporidium removal



AllChem Performance Products, Inc.  
Phone: 352.378.9696  
FAX: 866.343.1216  
email: [vantage@allchem.com](mailto:vantage@allchem.com)  
[www.vantagewatercare.com](http://www.vantagewatercare.com)

# VANTAGE

Copyright 2015  
VANTAGE is a registered trademark of  
AllChem Performance Products, Inc.



PO Box 1903  
Pelham, AL 35124

PRSRD STD  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT 284  
MIDLAND MI



**Build  
Faster**

[www.sprung.com](http://www.sprung.com) | 1 800 528 9899 | [info@sprung.com](mailto:info@sprung.com)

# From Concept to Campus in Months



FOR MORE  
INFORMATION

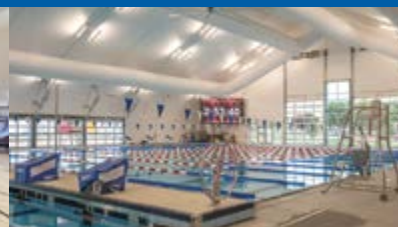
James Madison University

## Keep student life moving through every phase of renovation

From dining halls to athletics facilities, Sprung delivers fast, flexible building solutions designed for the pace of campus life. Our relocatable structures provide interim dining and multi-use spaces, when and where you need them.



**LEASE OR PURCHASE. DELIVERED IN MONTHS, NOT YEARS.**



ALLENTOWN | ATLANTA | CALGARY | DUBAI | DUBLIN | HOUSTON | LOS ANGELES | SALT LAKE CITY | SAN FRANCISCO | TORONTO