

# library



## The Library Transforms to Learning Commons

The library is the academic heart of a school, but just as education is changing, so too is the library. With information available online virtually any time, housing countless books has become of secondary importance.

Today's library should be a broader and deeper resource than ever, a place where traditional and new knowledge resources, instructors and students converge in an ongoing process of learning, teaching and discovery. It doesn't require more real estate, but simply rethinking how library space is used.

To better understand the trends, Steelcase Education initiated a major study of libraries at 13 public and private colleges and universities across the U.S. The research revealed that the library is becoming a key location outside the classroom where constructivist pedagogy plays out as students learn to analyze information and create new knowledge, often working in groups. This change represents a transformation from book storage site to center of interactive learning.

The library's dramatic shift to a multi-dimensional space hasn't been easy. For example, in recent decades, growing computer use led libraries to install computer stations, but their haphazard application often placed people in busy corridors with no privacy. Group work areas were often placed without intention next to individual study areas, leaving quiet-seeking students frustrated while student teams searched, often fruitlessly, for collaborative spaces and tools to support group projects.

Intentional design, adjacency planning and understanding intended behaviors through research result in a better approach. There is a rhythm to an individual's learning process and effective learning spaces support this rhythm of learning. Just as the classroom needs to support varied learning and teaching styles across different class periods and courses, library space must be equally adaptable to the changing needs of students and instructors. A reduced emphasis on housing books frees up real estate for individual and group learning. For example, Steelcase research shows that college students tend to work in groups more in the evenings (outside class and work time) and individually or with one other person during mornings and afternoons. Spaces for solo tasks work best early in the day and must be flexible later on for other needs.

Primary and secondary students are increasingly working together in constructivist pedagogies, too. The library remains a key resource for learning how to find and use information efficiently, but it's also a place for peer-to-peer mentoring, small group projects and access to hardware and software.

A palette of place supports the demands placed on a library today. A variety of settings thoughtfully located throughout the library allows students and instructors to choose the space appropriate to different kinds of learning, whether that's a quiet place for individual study, a space to work on a group project or other location they choose simply to match their need that day for a particular level of quiet or stimulation. Having the choice, and being able to choose, empowers students and teachers and makes them more productive.

In the past, the library was a place where printed materials were used to instill a love of reading and teach research skills. Now both print and digital are used, while students take a more active role in learning. Both instructors and students look to the library as an essential resource to support the changes in education. This transformation drives the need for new, multi-use library spaces, and multiplies the ways the library supports teaching and learning.

### WHAT WE OBSERVED

Libraries are becoming the academic heart of the campus, supporting social connections, collaborative needs and team projects, along with event areas for campus and community activities.

The central role of computer hardware and software has resulted in a demand for more library computer labs.

Anywhere/anytime information access has lessened the need to reference books, so book stacks are being reduced and moved to less prominent locations.

Librarians' roles are changing; they're instructors, technology advisors, research assistants and collaborators with students and faculty.

### WHAT WE HEARD

*"We have to look at our information in the library and rethink the ways we provide it to people."*

#### Librarian

*"It's really hard to focus when you're in an enormous room that has noise going all over the place and you're trying to read things on a screen. Our library has a 'state-of-the-art computer area,' but the entire floor is open. Everyone who's walking to the other end of the library has to come through."*

#### Student





media:scape merges furniture and technology to help students collaborate, co-create and share ideas more effectively. media:scape boosts collaboration across the table or around the globe – by transforming classrooms, libraries or social spaces, connecting students and allowing them to share information seamlessly.

## LEARNING SPACES LIBRARY

# Tips for a New Library Ecosystem

Most existing libraries were designed and built for finding books and checking them out. As today's libraries transcend that limited role, they must evolve as students' needs expand. As self-directed learning spaces, four zones emerge, each supporting different types of behavior and activities. Across these zones, new library spaces must support collaboration and group work, private study space, computing equipment and

content-creation tools. Each quadrant represents a set of behaviors that should be intentionally planned for.

Whether in a new space or a renovation, adjacencies are crucial, including planning for technology in practically every setting from team, collaborative spaces to social areas to individual study spaces. Visual and acoustical privacy requires careful consideration.

### PRIVATE/ALONE

Individual spaces should support focused work but also the appropriate scale for an individual, their wellbeing and the security and accommodation of work tools.

- 1 Provide enclosed space for visual privacy.
- 2 Support the need for extreme focus and concentration by blocking all distractions.
- 3 Allow temporary ownership of space.
- 4 Support a range of short- and long-term ownership of space and privacy with assigned, secure spaces.

### PUBLIC/ALONE

Individuals want to work in the company of others to stay socially connected while working alone in various open settings.

- 1 Support the need for co-existence of focused work and social interactions; allow settings to switch from individual to dyads and triads.
- 2 Offer highly flexible and self-customizable furnishings and tools.
- 3 Support postural changes for short- and long-term use.
- 4 Enable quick, targeted access to computers, online services, printers, etc.
- 5 Support perched and standing short-term postures.
- 6 Provide access to dedicated computer workstations, specialized technologies and software.

### PRIVATE/TOGETHER

Library classrooms should accommodate active learning, computing and distance learning with fluid transitions. Team spaces should support multiple meeting modes and student project teams.

- 1 Support a fluid switch between activities.
- 2 Provide a range of blended learning and teaching environments, including online, webinars, etc.
- 3 Support multiple meeting modes – inform, evaluate and co-create – for small to large groups.
- 4 Provide tools for visual display, collaborative technology, information and acoustical privacy.
- 5 Provide highly flexible, customizable furniture to meet collaborative, privacy and ergonomic needs.

### PUBLIC/TOGETHER

Students often do group work in open areas to stay connected to others, requiring flexibility to meet their changing needs. Reference areas should capitalize on librarians' expertise in mentoring and learning. The increased use of technology requires just-in-time technical support. The increased use for events requires multi-purpose, adaptable gathering places.

- 1 Accommodate impromptu teaching and collaborative activities.
- 2 Remove barriers between students and staff.
- 3 Provide accessible dedicated spaces for technical services.
- 4 Create multi-purpose, adaptable spaces to host large functions.

Consider the entire library floor plan when retrofitting any settings, designing with adjacencies in mind. When planning, be sure to support each quadrant independently and holistically within the entire floor space, acknowledging acoustic and/or visual privacy needs.

PRIVATE/ALONE

Individually dedicated spaces support a range of focus and concentration and should consider appropriate human scale for an individual and their wellbeing. Plan for short- and long-term security of personal items and the accommodation of new worktools.

PUBLIC/ALONE

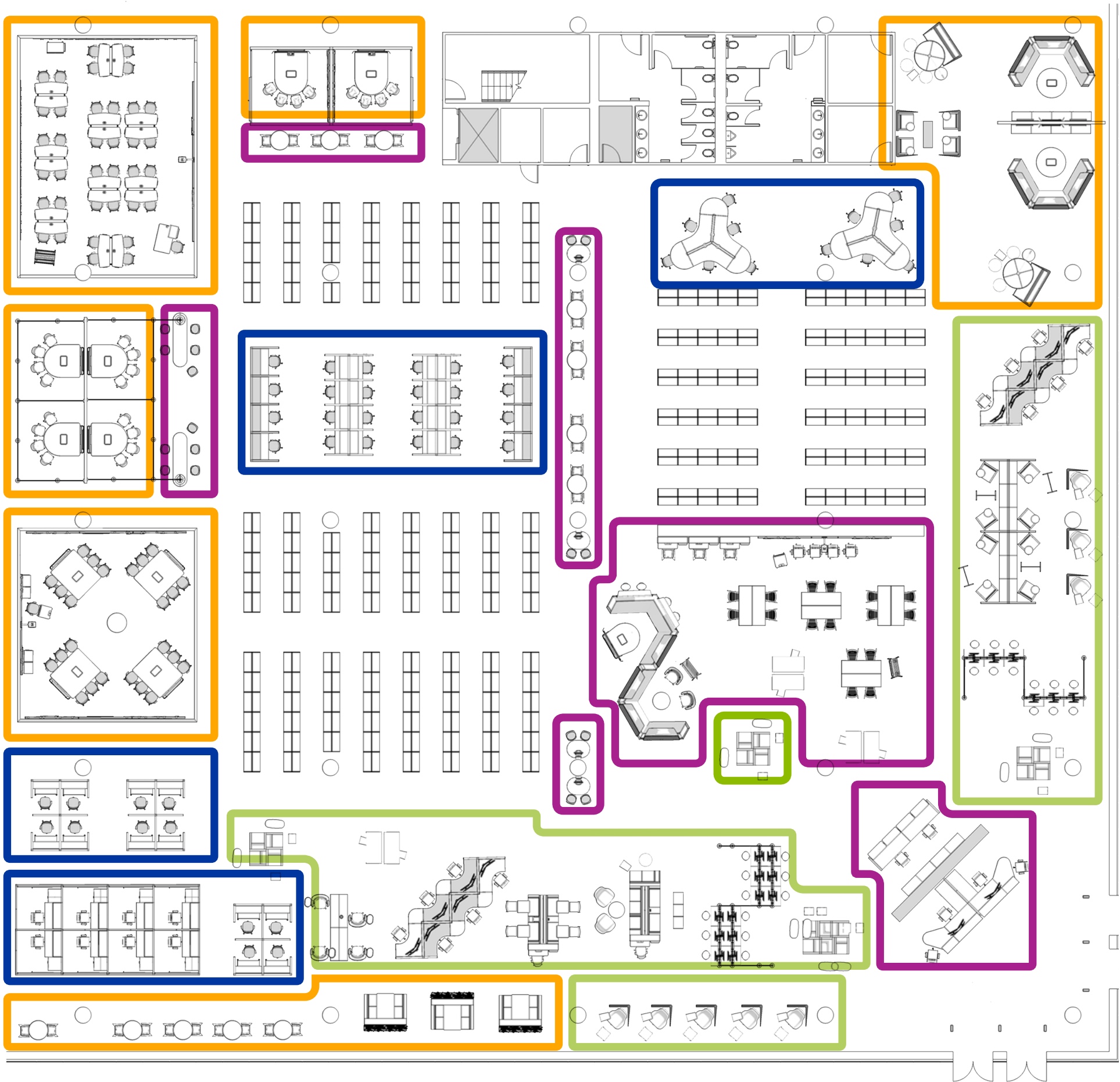
Individuals want to study in the company of others to stay socially connected while working alone in a variety of open settings. Support the need for co-existing focused work and social interactions, allowing settings to switch from individual to dyads and triads. Offer highly flexible and self-customizable furnishings and tools while supporting postural changes for short- and long-term use.

PUBLIC/TOGETHER

Support the demand for large, scheduled functions with multi-purpose, highly adaptable gathering places. Accommodate impromptu teaching and collaborative activities by removing barriers between students and staff. Recognize the increased need for just-in-time technical support for questions, support and maintenance.

PRIVATE/TOGETHER

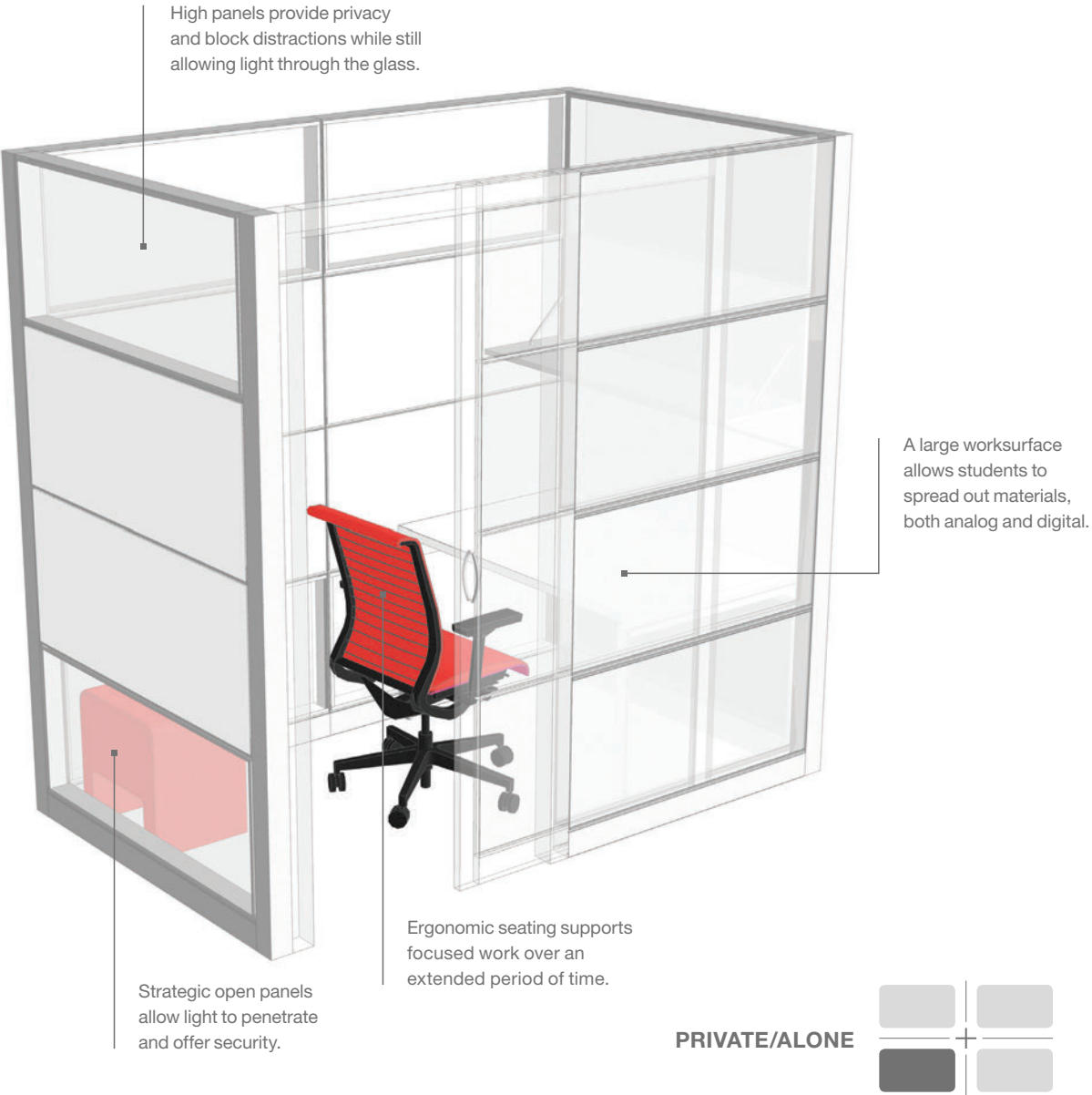
Technology-rich library classrooms should accommodate multiple uses such as active learning, computing and distance learning with fluid transitions. Support multiple meeting modes – inform, evaluate and co-create – for small to large groups.





Study cave

Private study is still very prevalent in the library. Allow students to block distractions and settle in for long periods of study with panels and plenty of workspace space.

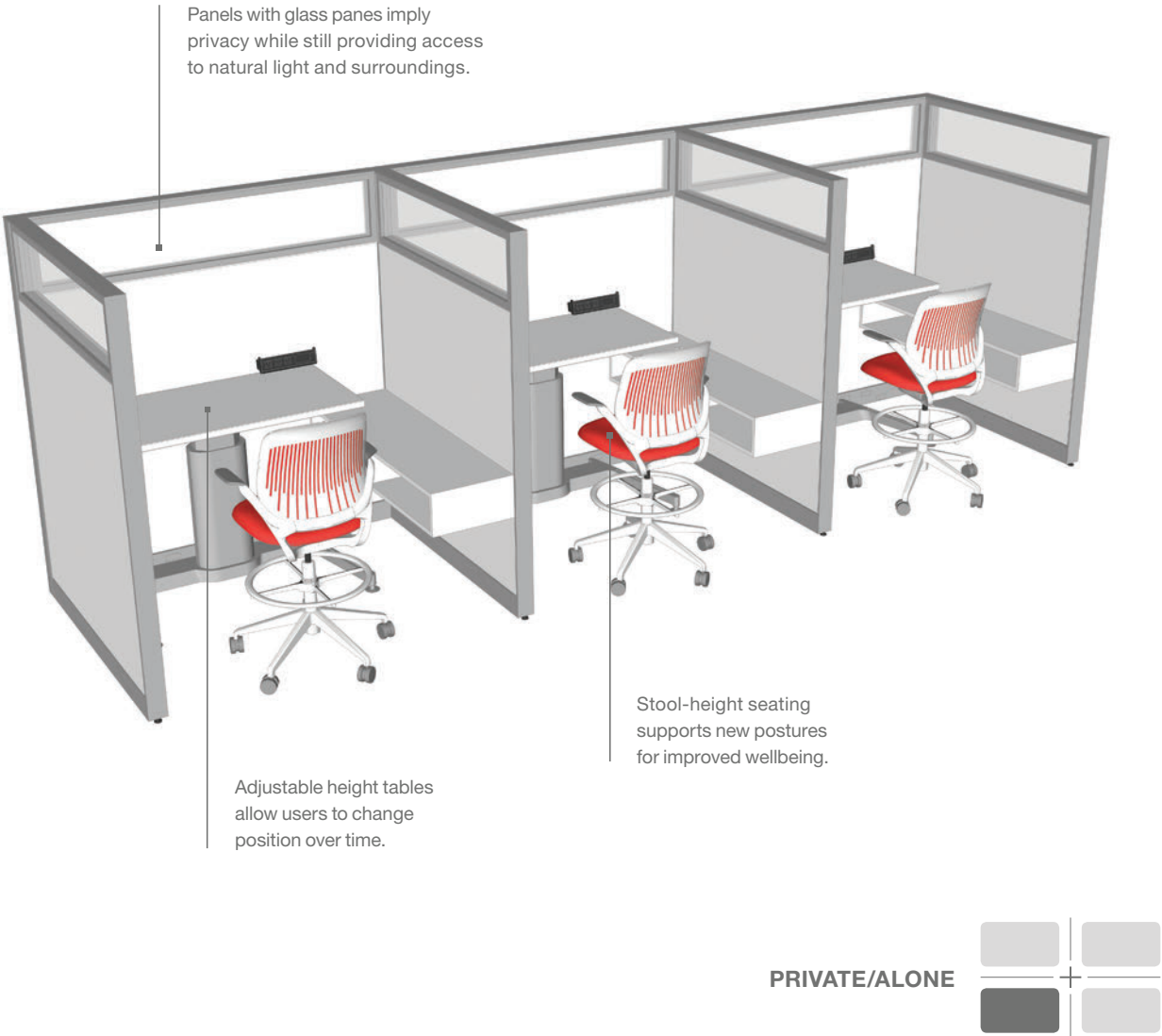


FEATURED PRODUCTS

Think.....	134	Universal .....	140
Davos .....	135	Montage .....	

Learning pod

Spaces for individual work should provide options for short- and long-term stays. Support these with options for posture change and temporary storage for belongings.

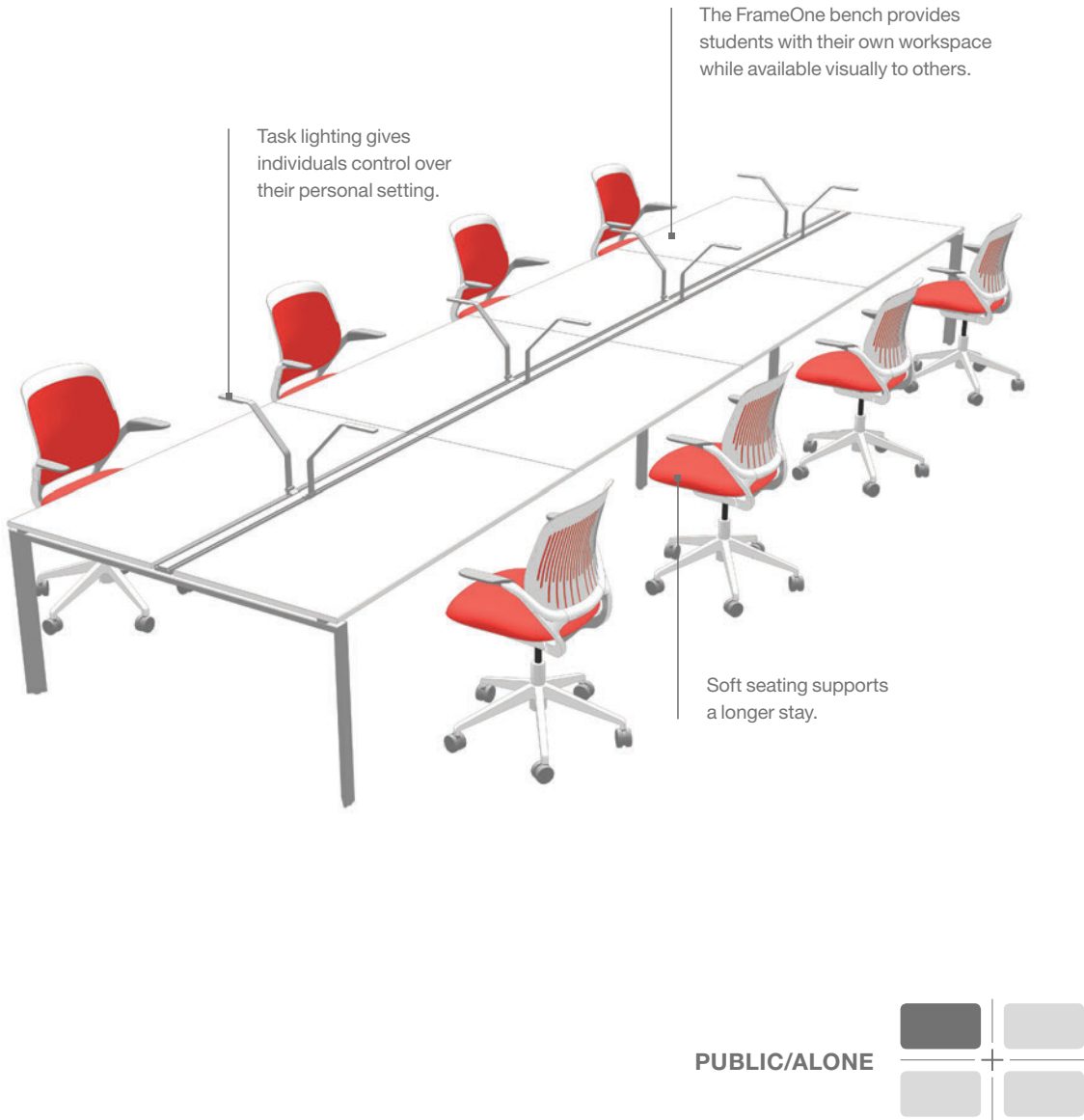


FEATURED PRODUCTS

Airtouch.....	140	Answer .....	
cobi .....	132	Elective Elements .....	

Learning bench

Even when focused work is required, students often prefer to study in the presence of others.



FEATURED PRODUCTS

cobi .....	132
SOTO LED task light	
FrameOne	

Nest

Students seek flexible spaces to support individual work when they need to focus as well as social interactions to stay connected with others.



FEATURED PRODUCTS

Sidewalk mobile.....	137	Answer
Groupwork.....	139	Elective Elements

Mentor pod

Relationships between library staff and students are evolving into mentorship and guidance. Remove barriers so these connections can happen anywhere.



PUBLIC/TOGETHER

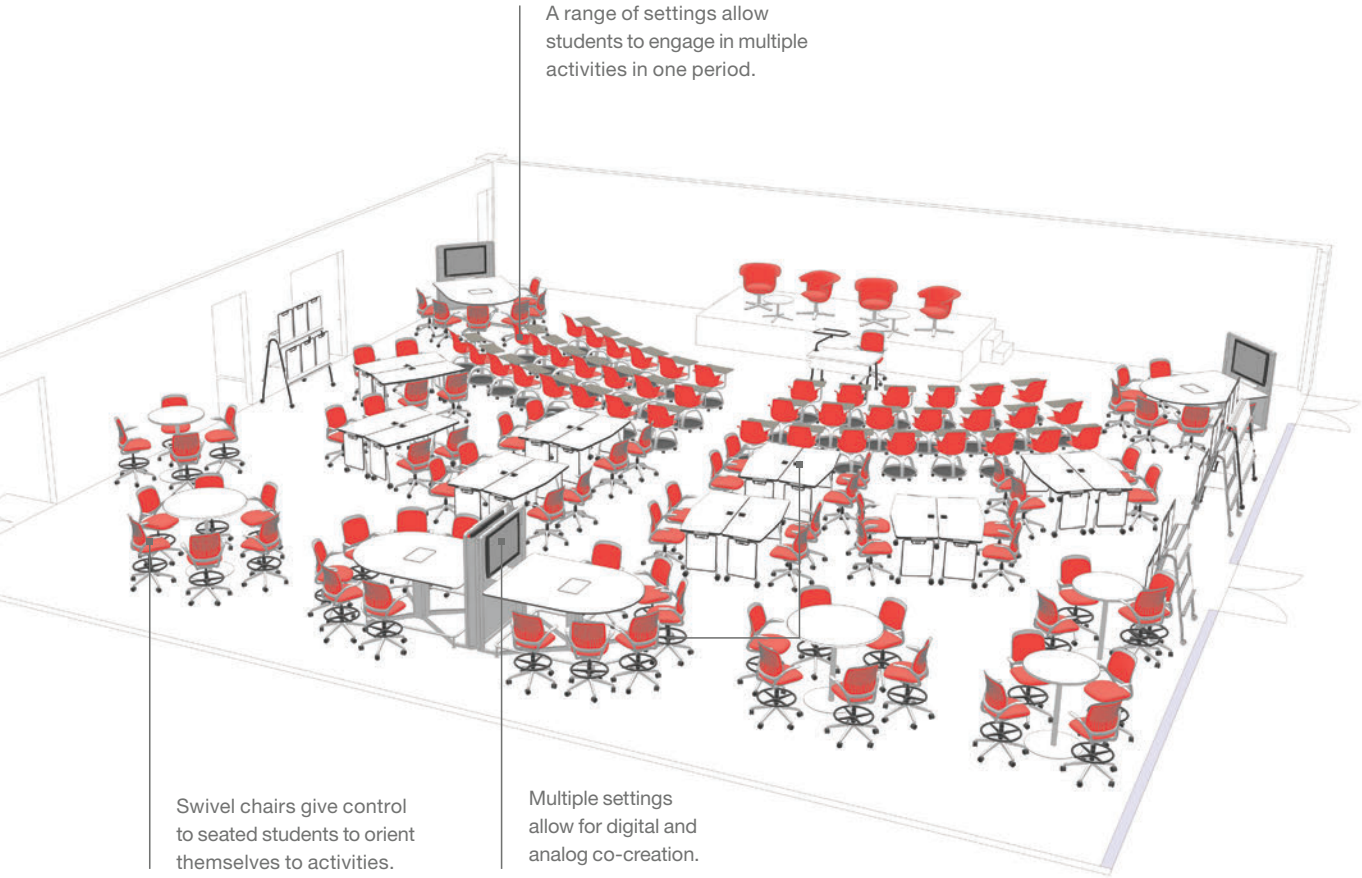


FEATURED PRODUCTS

Think.....	134
Enea stools	
c:scape	

Event forum

Multi-purpose, adaptable spaces are needed to serve a wide variety of functions that may depend on the day, week or term. These spaces allow for a rhythm of learning to happen all within one space.



PUBLIC/TOGETHER



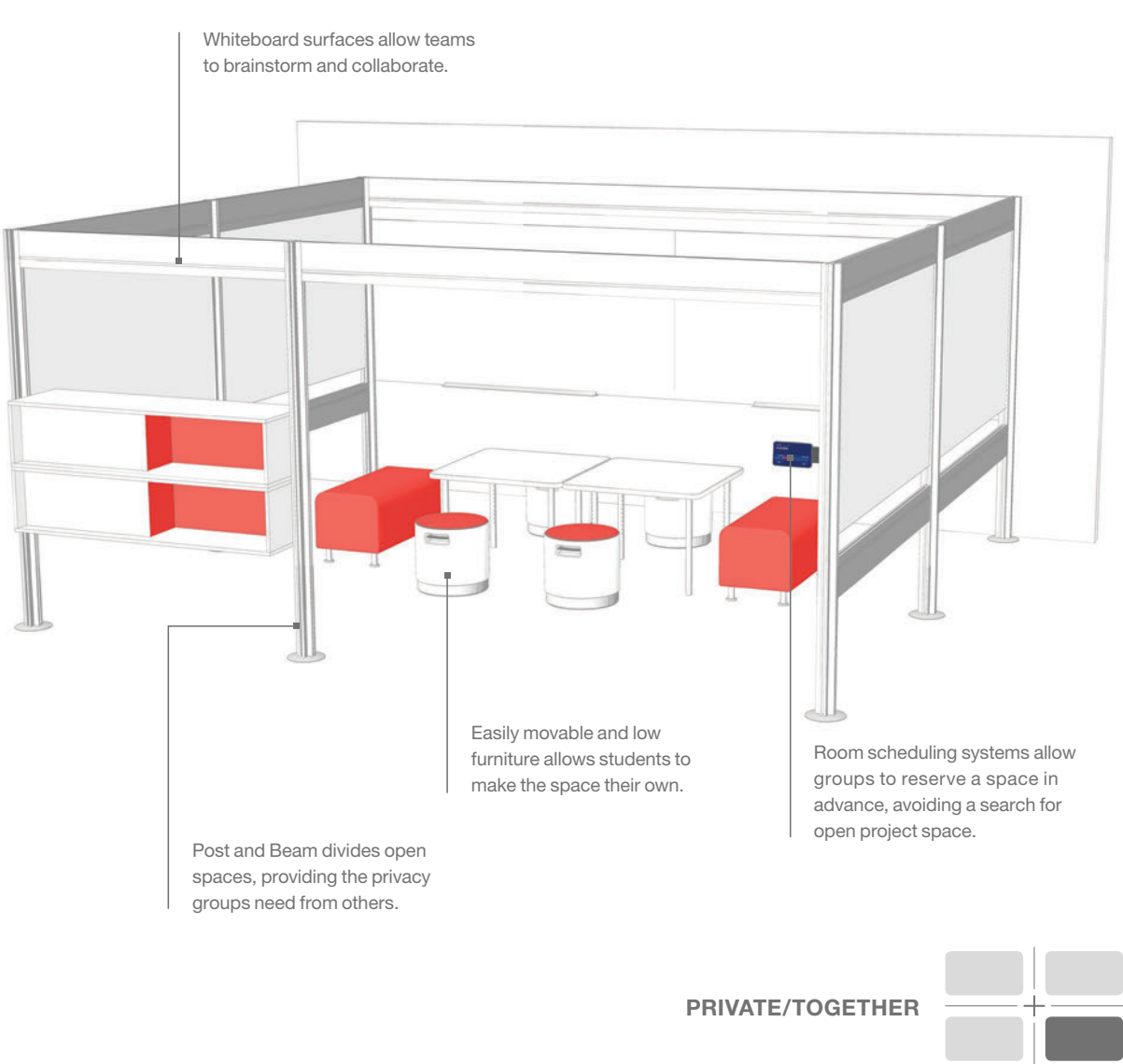
FEATURED PRODUCTS

cobi seating .....	132	Verb tables .....	140
Node seating.....	133	media:scape .....	141
i2i.....	136	Verb easels .....	142
Groupwork.....	139	Verb whiteboards.....	143



Immersive work studio

Groups often meet to complete assignments in libraries. Provide them with privacy from others and tools to collaborate.

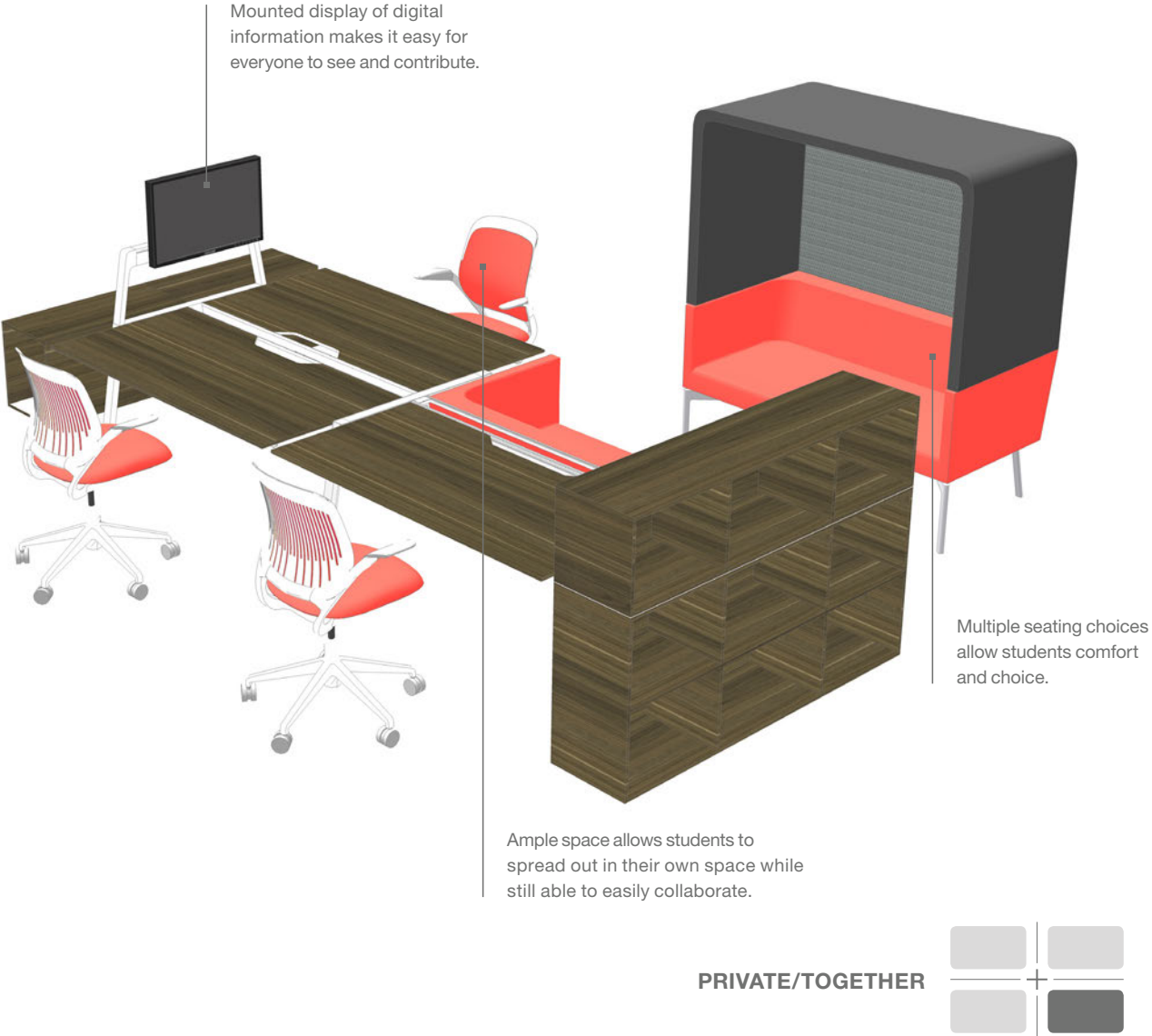


FEATURED PRODUCTS

Buoy .....	132	Alight bench ottomen
Groupwork tables .....	139	Duo
RoomWizard .....	142	Post and Beam

Campsite

Students often need ample space to spread out and work together. Provide them with choice and control in an inviting setting to collaborate, co-create and discuss.

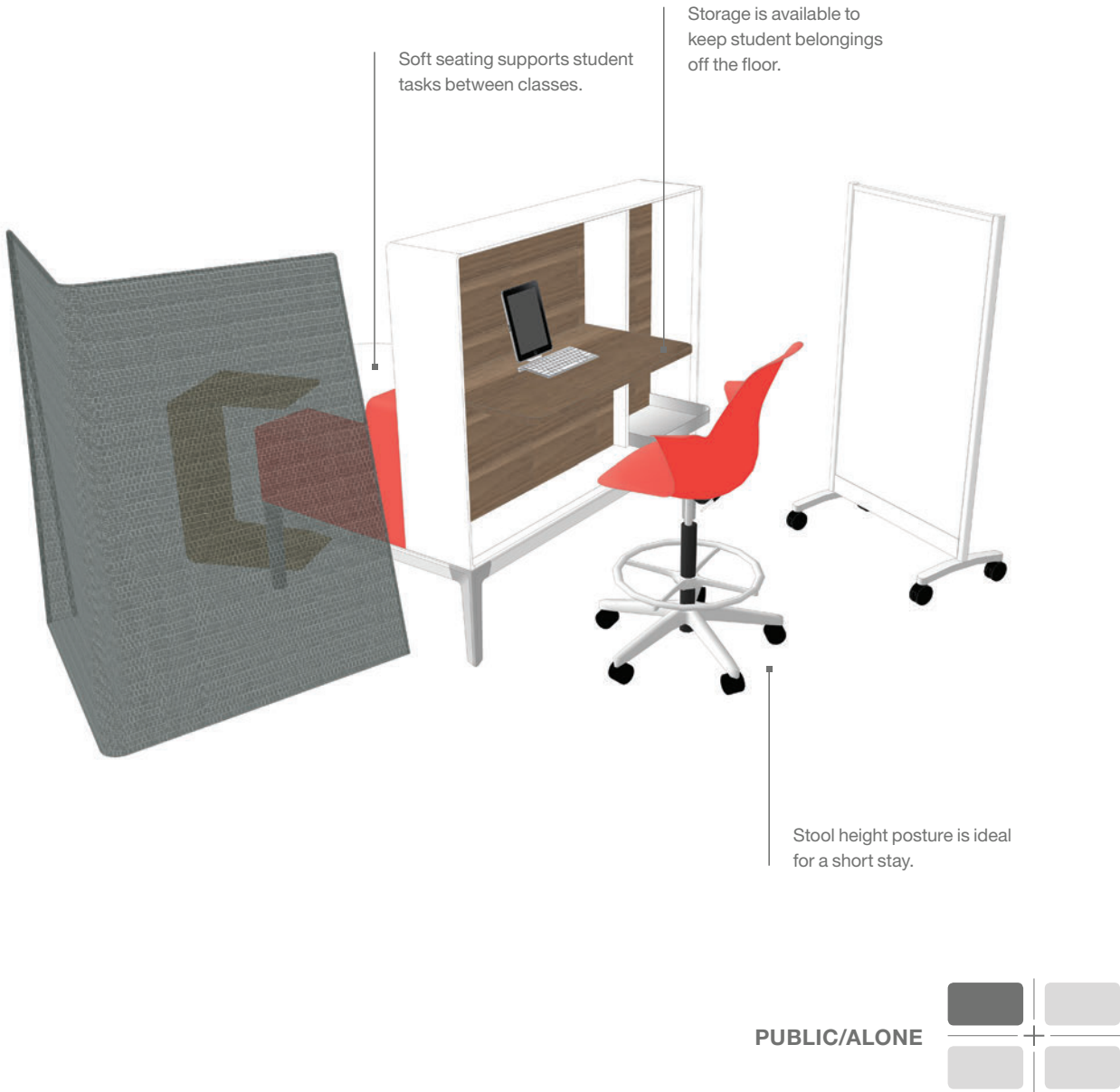


FEATURED PRODUCTS

cobi .....	132
Bivi.....	138

Drive Thru

The drive thru supports short-term walk-up tasks such as library database searches or printing.

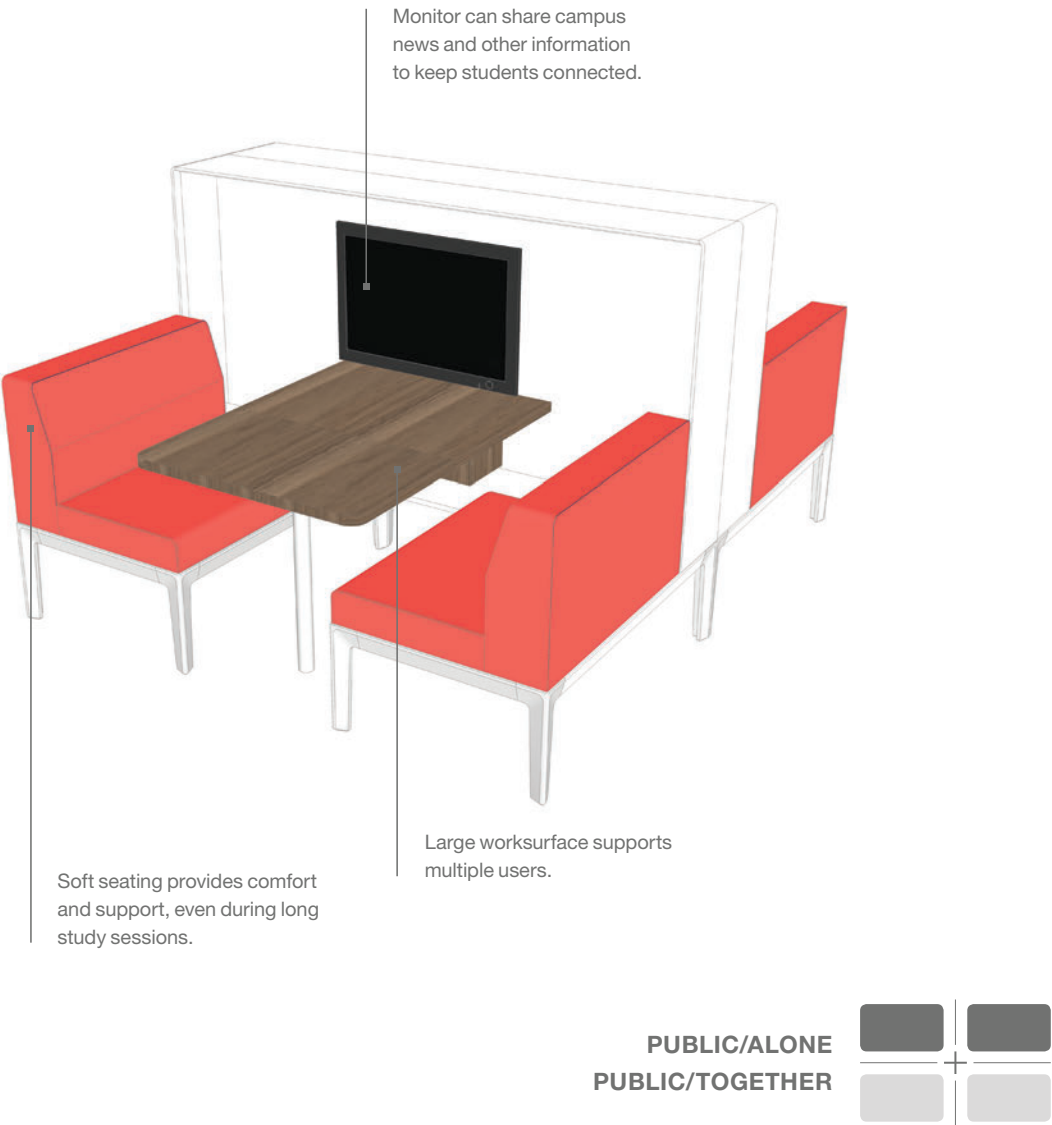


FEATURED PRODUCTS

Node seating.....	133	Groupwork mobile whiteboard .....	141
Regard .....	137	Campfire Screen.....	143

Campsite

This multi-purpose space supports social breaks, collaborative group work and individual study with the ability to spread out materials.



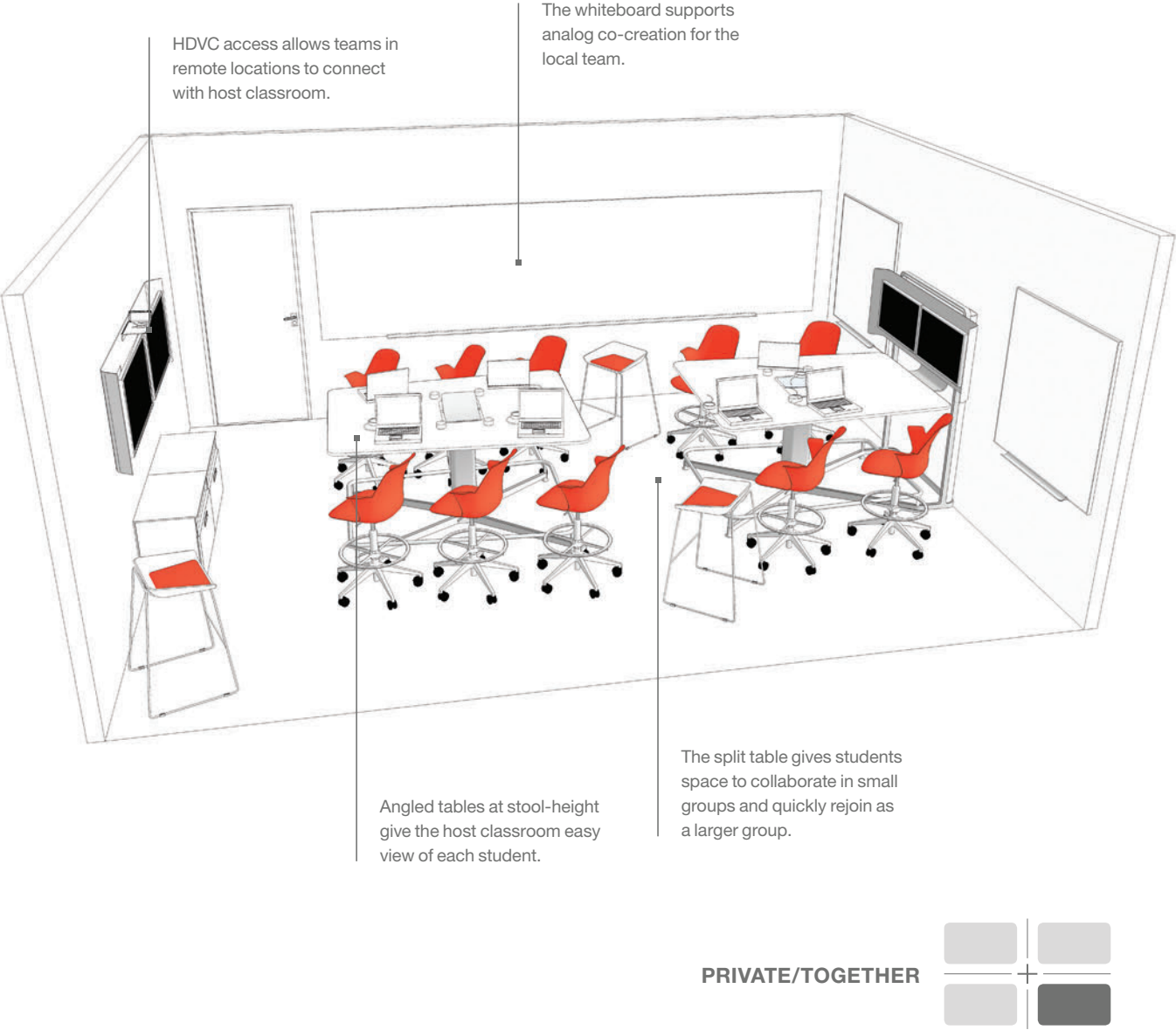
FEATURED PRODUCTS

Regard .....	137
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Team Studio

The Team Studio enhances connections between local and remote instructors and students. The sense of connectivity experienced by participants allows for an engaged atmosphere that encourages discovery.



FEATURED PRODUCTS

Node seating.....	133	Scoop stool
media:scape .....	141	c:scape low storage
Edge series whiteboard.....	142	





# Customer Story

## Grand Valley State University

### Allendale, MI

“We wanted this to be a very different place, to feel different and look different, so that students could act differently.”

Different indeed. As Lee VanOrsdel, Dean of Grand Valley State University (GVSU) libraries suggests, the new Mary Idema Pew Library & Information Commons eschews the traditional college library in favor of a dramatically new approach: an inspired integration of space, furniture and tools for active learning.

GVSU’s new library supports individual and collaborative learning, allows access to content in any form and responds to changing rhythms of learning.

“Up to 90% of learning happens outside the classroom, so this library is an academic hub for learning that reinforces what they learned in the classroom,” says Van Orsdel.

Post-class learning often happens in informal learning spaces in the library, places students choose to support their individual needs. In these self-directed learning spaces, true student discovery often occurs. And as group work and collaboration take hold in classrooms, library spaces are often where team projects are completed.

When GVSU began planning their new library five years ago, they wanted to rethink the library’s role in learning and how the process of learning itself was changing. They partnered with Steelcase and SHW Group, an architecture and engineering firm, to conduct onsite research. As part of their work, the team designed and prototyped two types of study spaces: 1) a group space with worktools (portable whiteboards, mobile tables and chairs, storage shelves, power access) and 2) a media:scape setting where people can connect a digital device and share digital content on two integrated flat screens, also with group worktools.

“The study was invaluable to the library planning team and the most important thing we learned is that **there are daily rhythms to the way students work alone or in groups, and seasonal rhythms based on how they complete assignments over the course of a semester,**” says VanOrsdel. Student activity increases around mid-term exams and due dates for papers. Each day also had its own rhythm. “Students work pretty much alone during the daytime. But at night, groups come together, pull apart, reform and regroup constantly. They don’t just go to a table or into a room; they consult all night long.”



“Flexible furniture really isn’t an option – it’s a requirement if we want to optimize use of the building.”

Lee Van Orsdel  
Dean of University Libraries

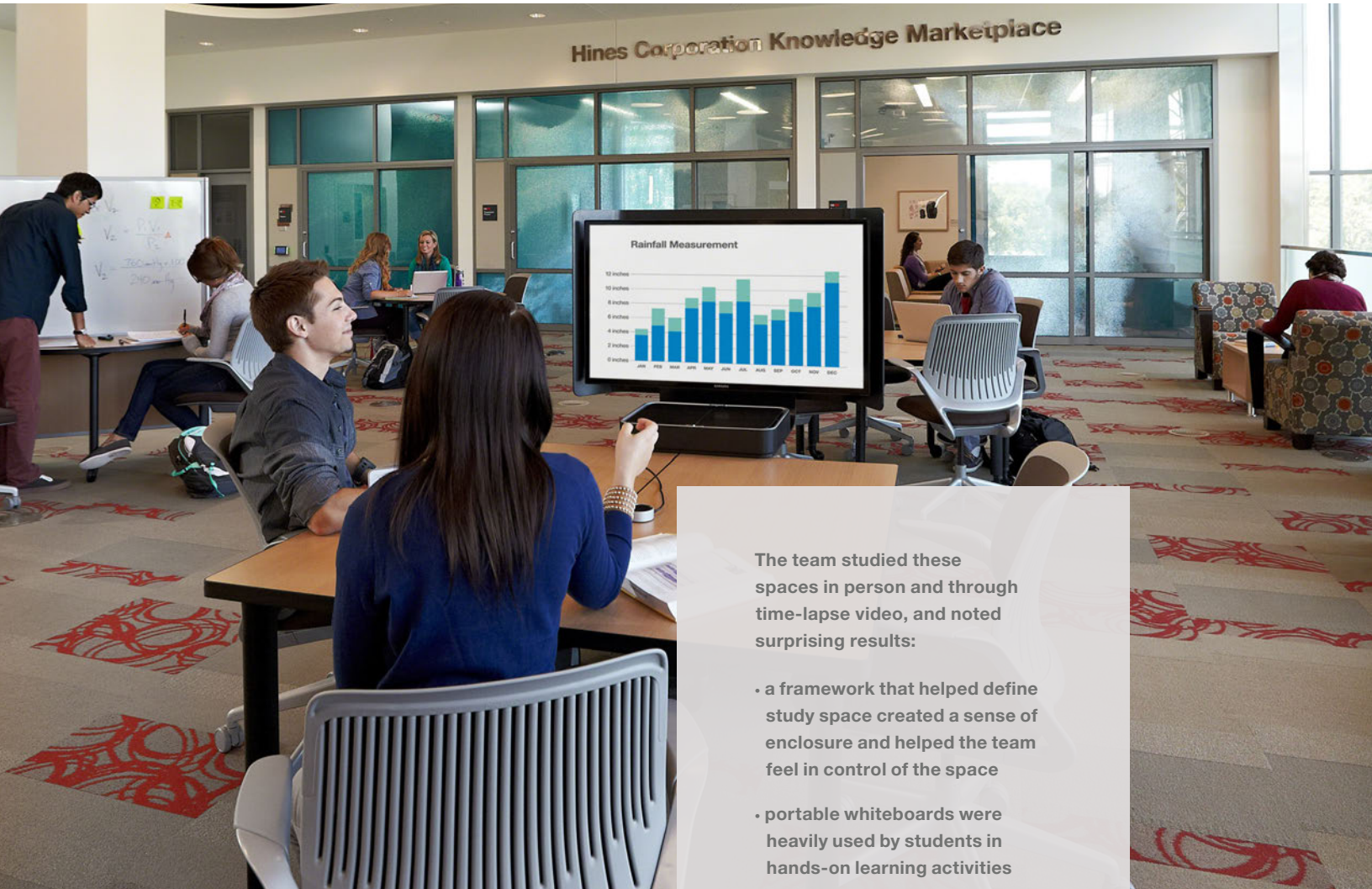
Research revealed how student postures change through the day. While on task and hurrying between classes, they sit upright in a chair at a table. If they’re waiting for a friend they kick back on a stool or in a lounge chair with a phone or tablet and relax. At night, they look for furniture that’s mobile to accommodate team projects.

The university also discovered that unlike most groups, study groups (students who study difficult subjects together because it produces better outcomes) tend to meet between 10AM and 3PM.

The vagaries of student study habits presented a design challenge: plan the space for the daytime when students work on their own, or for the evening when they work in groups?

GVSU believes the best solution is to create spaces with furniture that’s mobile, reconfigurable and in a variety of sizes and shapes. So the library has 19 different enclosed group study rooms that hold from two to twelve people, plus dozens of open areas with movable furniture. There are 29 types of seating, plenty of both mobile and wall-mounted whiteboards and media:scape collaborative settings in various places around the library. There are also several outdoor spaces, including an amphitheater, an indoor café, outdoor patio and even a third floor reading garden.





The team studied these spaces in person and through time-lapse video, and noted surprising results:

- a framework that helped define study space created a sense of enclosure and helped the team feel in control of the space
- portable whiteboards were heavily used by students in hands-on learning activities
- storage shelves weren't used much, probably because the teams didn't own the space
- power outlets were used often by students who increasingly depend on digital technology



VanOrsdel says “flexible furniture really isn’t an option – it’s a requirement if we want to optimize use of the building. And if we’re wrong about this, we have so much flexibility that whatever students want to do, we can do it.”

The west side of the library invites conversation in various collaborative workspaces, with piped in, programmed sound so users feel comfortable speaking in normal tones of voice. The east side is for quiet, contemplative work, with white noise to help mask sounds and reduce distractions.

“In the classroom, students are involved in hands-on learning but the instructor still leads. **In the library, students take control of their learning as they discover, analyze, and share information, and in the process become comfortable working individually and with others.** It’s a major shift from being a reading and storage site to a center for active learning,” says Elise Valoe, senior design researcher with Steelcase, and part of a team that studied libraries at private and public colleges and universities across the country.

About 150,000 books are in open stacks and another 600,000 are available through an automated storage system located beneath the library. This reduces the building’s book footprint by 90% and frees up space where students, faculty and staff can work however and whenever they desire. These workspaces range from reflective, contemplative places, what VanOrsdel calls “almost cell-like spaces where a student can find refuge,” to group spaces for active content sharing and creation.

The library is extremely busy. Traffic is much higher than at GVSU’s old library, and student reaction has been overwhelmingly positive. The university also is working with Steelcase and professional education associations to design ways to more effectively measure the impact the new library has on the learning experience.

“Ultimately, we’ll be able to tell if our programs and tools and spaces correlate with higher grades, with more persistence to graduation and faster times to graduation. I’m really optimistic that this is a model for other universities in how a library can have a greater impact on student learning.”

GO DEEPER

See the Mary Idema Pew Library on [YouTube.com/SteelcaseTV](https://www.youtube.com/SteelcaseTV)