



## **Perspective/Opinion**

# **A Vision for the Future: What Would a Design Space Look and Sound Like?**

By Lana M. Minshew, PhD, MEd, Assistant professor, and Director of the Kern Institute Human-Centered Design Lab

*How does the physical space and the culture fostered by the individuals who inhabit it influence the creativity and collaboration generated...*

Imagine one of the study rooms on MCW's campus, they are typically small, sometimes windowless rooms with a single table and only 1-2 chairs placed around the table. What is the first thing that pops into your head about these spaces? One may be that these are spaces for quiet, individual, or solitary work and groups larger than two are discouraged.

The physical space we inhabit influences our mood, productivity, creativity, and even how we interact with others. The space described above may evoke one mindset, whereas a large open space, with lots of natural light, that has dry erase boards on wheels and brightly colored furniture at varying heights that is easily moved about the room evokes a different feeling and mindset.

### **The Space**

According to the Berlin School of Creative Leadership, humans are inspired by our environments. What we are exposed to in our surroundings influences our ideas even if we don't actively "think" about them. Therefore, if the goal of a space is to spark creativity and encourage collaboration, we want more elements of the second space than the first. The freedom to physically move about the space and to rearrange furniture helps to spark creative thinking it also reinforces a mindset of not being afraid to tackle the status quo and be innovative! Fixed space promotes conservation and hanging on to old ideas, whereas fluidity of a space is essential for designing as it allows for and can spark creative thinking. Having different types of furniture, such as tables with chairs, but also couches and bean bags changes the way we think in a space. Even just the act of everyone in a group standing around a dry erase board changes our thinking and encourages collaboration.

The space we design in is so important that the Stanford d.school has a book, *Make Space* by Scott Doorley and Scott Witthoft, that describes in detail how to create a design space. The authors of *Make Space* share that what makes a great design space is its ability to evolve and iterate the space as needed. To have multiple ways of interacting with and in the space for brainstorming, building, and testing. The Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford or the d.school is a place where people use design to develop their own creative potential. The d.school brings together students, faculty, practitioners from all disciplines, ensuring there are a multitude of perspectives and backgrounds to participate in real world, unbounded design challenges. With the mission to demonstrate that design should be accessible to all, and that everyone is creative. At MCW this could be achieved by creating a designated design space that our students, faculty, and staff could connect with for the purpose of being innovative in medical education. The space would host design thinking workshops for courses, pathways, and organizations. It would be a space that fosters innovative teaching practices as well as encourage learning. In addition, the Transformational Ideas Initiative (TI2) would hold their bootcamps there to help foster creativity and collaboration between and among project groups.

## **The Tools**

A design thinking space also needs the proper tools lying about to support creative thinking. As noted earlier dry erase boards with markers are great ways to spark creative and collaborative thought. However, sticky notes – of all shapes and sizes, are excellent ways to encourage brainstorming and idea generation. In design thinking we need to make at the speed of thought, meaning we need materials that are easily accessible and usable to keep up with our ideas. Thus, we need items such as paper, pencils, cardboard, tape, glue, foil, felt, Legos, along with a myriad of other supplies for constructing quick and simple prototypes for rapid testing. In MCW's future design space materials would be organized into carts that could be moved about the room or to any MCW classroom as a way to incorporate design thinking into medical education.

## **The People**

In addition to the physical space, Doorley and Witthoft describe how the people within the space help to cultivate a culture that encourages design thinking mindsets. These mindsets include: empathy, optimism, embracing ambiguity, prototyping, learning from failure, iterating, and finally creative confidence. These mindsets help to move beyond the status quo and unlock innovative ideas. A future design space at MCW would be one where everyone could share their emerging ideas, it would be a safe place to fail and reimagine medical education, as well as one that values and encourages collaboration. Ultimately, a design space at MCW could serve as a launching pad for innovative ideas that could change the way we think about medicine and medical education.

## Design with Us!

The Human-Centered Design lab is currently collaborating with the Lubar Entrepreneurship Center at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee and Froedtert hospital on a community-centered design project focused on designing two mobile health clinics to serve the greater Milwaukee area. To create the most effective community-centered design as possible, we invite community members to join the design team by sharing your experience with mobile healthcare or offering your ideas using a full-scale clinic design model. The model is in the first-floor cafeteria lobby of the MCW – Medical Education Building and will be open to everyone through January 31, 2023. We are holding 4 structured design sprints throughout January, please use the [link to register](#) to participate.

### Dates/Times for Design Workshops

Friday, January 6<sup>th</sup> 12:00 – 1:30pm  
Wednesday, January 11<sup>th</sup> 5:30 – 7pm  
Wednesday, January 18<sup>th</sup> 5:00 – 6:30pm  
Friday, January 20<sup>th</sup> 12:00 – 1:30pm

[Register for Design Workshops here](#)

*For further reading:*

*Doorley S, Witthoft S. Make Space: how to set the stage for creative collaboration. Hasso Plattner. Standford d.school. 2012.*

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