

OLD SCIENCE CENTER DESIGN TEAM:

PRINCIPLES, PROGRAMMATIC PRIORITIES, AND CONCEPTUAL GUIDELINES

Throughout planning, the Design Team has consistently referred to the Old Science Center as “New Main.” Our nickname for this as-yet-unnamed building expresses our central design principle: collaborative community. As in the original Old Main that marked our arrival on the hill, “New Main” provides space for faculty, staff, and administrators, acknowledging that each of us plays a vital role in achieving our community’s shared vision: to foster the development of our students not just in the classroom but in all aspects of their lives. The life of a student is attached to “New Main” from their first campus visit to graduation. No single entity, no individual nor work unit, can achieve this vision alone; it does indeed “take a village,” a collaborative community.

I. MIXED USE BUILDING DEVELOPMENT: INNOVATIVE PRINCIPLES FOR DESIGNING FACILITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A) GATEWAY TO THE CAMPUS:

Housing academic programs, offices, and administration the renovated Old Science Center provides a counterweight to Buntrock Commons, linked by the paths on the college green. Because it houses Enrollment, the President’s and Provost’s Offices, and Human Resources, all prospective students, staff and faculty will be welcomed to St. Olaf through the doors of “New Main.” In this respect the building will serve as a gateway to the entire campus.

Because it is connected to the new Regents Science Center, the Old Science Center will also serve as a pathway to the Southeast side of campus (with students and faculty taking advantage of internal corridors to make their way to classes).

Housing the World Language students and faculty, the Education Department and its prospective teachers, International and Off Campus Studies and the culturally diverse TRIO students and staff—the building will contain a remarkably diverse community, one that makes manifest St. Olaf College’s commitment to both domestic diversity and a global perspective.

B) INSTITUTIONAL CLUSTERS: THE LEVELS

Working with the architects, the Design Team not only created a guiding principle for “New Main” as a whole, but also developed conceptual guidelines for each level within the building. These guidelines remain flexible, recognizing the ever-evolving, creative work of liberal arts education. Light has been a central concern throughout the planning process, and in the renovated building larger exterior windows, extensive skylights, and a large multi-level atrium will spread natural light throughout the building. Each level contains classrooms, meeting rooms, offices and work spaces; although levels may differ in general character, each contains all constituents of our collaborative community.

Ground Level: Campus Health and Safety

The ground level of the building is only half-excavated, hence half the size of the other levels. It is also the home of the building's mechanical systems. However, on the south side Campus Security and Health Services have ample new spaces. This level is accessible through stairs and an elevator as well as through direct ground level entrances. Campus Security has immediate access to vehicles in the building's small south lot.

Level One: Student Services Central

In general, "New Main" creates an opportunity for St. Olaf to locate diverse student service offices, programs, and activities in close proximity. Including the Dean of Students offices, Financial Aid, the Registrar and Residence Life, Level One provides convenient centralized access to vital campus support. This support extends to faculty and staff through the presence of Human Resources and parts of the Treasurer's office. At the same time, this level remains connected to the building's whole community through the presence of the World Languages Center, classrooms, computer labs, and a sky-lit International Plaza.

Level Two: Main Street

United by a broad, light-filled, and lively corridor ("the street") crossing the building from east to west, Level Two most expresses the mixed use character of "New Main." On this floor, Enrollment, the offices of the President and Provost, CIS, CILA, CEL, and the Education Department represent St. Olaf's commitments that were established in Old Main over 130 years ago, including access to higher education, the institutional dedication to teaching and learning, and an integrated, collaborative environment involving students, faculty, staff, and administration. "The Street" is both a way to organize the building and a symbol of a journey, from enrollment at St. Olaf College to a rewarding engagement with the world.

Level Three: International Crossroads

On this level, world language departments and faculty will work next to International and Off-Campus Studies and will benefit from being located in the same building as the World Languages Center. These adjacencies create a "Global Center," manifesting physically an important component of the college's overall commitment to international and global perspectives. Level three also contains classrooms, small and large meeting spaces, faculty offices, and centralized work spaces, encouraging a collaborative community of faculty, staff, and administrators dedicated to student learning.

II. INNOVATIVE FUNCTIONAL BENEFITS OF A MIXED USED HIGHER EDUCATION BUILDING

A) CENTRALIZATION OF RESOURCES AND WORK AREAS:

Many different work groups share this building, creating together a safe, confidential environment to serve our students. "New Main" brings us together for maximum

efficiency and collaboration, yet care has been taken to provide convenient places for confidential conversation and secure storage. To reduce waste and support our community's commitment to sustainable practices, areas such as photocopying, mail distribution, storage, and basic work materials are in convenient, central locations, rather than expensively replicated throughout the building.

B) COMMUNITY AND COLLABORATION:

Shared work and break areas bring our community together and encourage productive conversations, connecting people often divided by tradition and/or work pattern at the college. Adjacencies have been carefully considered, and many spaces in "New Main" promote the cross-disciplinary, cross faculty and staff interactions that give rise to collaborative innovation and a stronger sense of community.

C) FLEXIBILITY AND FORESIGHT:

Space in the building has been designed to meet two (often conflicting) criteria. Care has been taken to provide comfort and clear navigation, communicating both to visitors and inhabitants a sense of security and permanence. Yet the building is also intended to be flexible, easily adaptable to institutional innovation. Meticulous attention to light, well thought-out details about workspace and care to make all spaces related visually or physically to central corridors ensuring that each part of the building is accessible, useful and attractive.

D) CUTTING-EDGE MULTI/SHARED USE TECHNOLOGY:

Areas with technology are intended to be especially flexible, designed for multiple users performing a wide range of tasks, and capable of rapid reconfiguration as the college's needs and the technology itself develop. In decisions about equipment and space design, relations between the technological resources in this building and in Rolvaag and IIT have been considered thoroughly, with attention paid to future developments in key institutional activities, such as teaching, in response to inevitably changing technologies.

E) EFFICIENT MOVE-THROUGH AND EXPRESSION OF INSTITUTIONAL STATURE:

The central location and mixed use character of "New Main" mean that large groups will often move through the building. Design decisions have focused, especially in the conception of "Main Street," on creating open corridors, brightly lit and unobstructed. At the same time, areas on each level have been designed to support classroom teaching, quiet study or small, personal meetings. Parking for Enrollment and important visitors is to be conveniently located just west of the building. The building's entrances will open out onto the college green both at the west and east ends, bringing light into the building and connecting it to the rest of campus. Each will have a welcoming lobby. The west entrance, which will serve many visitors as well as students, and the east, which bookends Buntrock plaza, will be dramatic and inviting, with architectural details that express institutional identity and well-being.