

Campus Crossroads:
Georgia Institute of Technology
Innovative Learning Resource Center

Session Abstract:

Georgia Tech has embarked upon an ambitious and focused recalibration of its undergraduate student education. Prompted by increasing specialization and flexibility in student learning environments, student life concerns and requests, and increased availability, sophistication, and pervasiveness of technology, the project has resulted in planning, programming, and concept design for the Innovative Learning Resource Center. The mission of this campus crossroads is to create an undergraduate learning community with exposure across the disciplines and emphasis on innovative teaching and experiential learning.

Relevance of proposal topic to conference theme:

As stated by President Clough in his 2006 State of the Institution address:

“Many of the opportunities for exploration lie in the cracks between the traditional academic disciplines, and this is the space in which Georgia Tech excels.”

The conference theme supports President Clough’s notion. It suggests that future campuses will be a patchwork of ever more diverse kinds of programs and learning environments, where the cracks between these environments contain the richest sources of investigation and research. With the case study of the Innovative Learning Resource Center (ILRC) emerging from the planning stages, Georgia Tech can say with confidence that the project itself is intended to be a patchwork, both as a building, and as the threads that tie the campus together. As planners, we tend to think in typologies and organized patterns. We feel that this project is an emergent typology reflective of the needs of today’s higher education environment. It celebrates these cracks between traditional academic disciplines and challenges traditional typological constructs.

Within the building, the programs will include: foundation science courses; general purpose classrooms ranging from 8 to 500 seats; project team rooms; an academic commons providing a range of tutoring options; a service commons providing academic advising, support, and success programs; a communications center; and the Center for Enhancement of Teaching and Learning. In addition, the ILRC is joined to the Georgia Tech library, where a host of reference and research material is readily available. Most importantly, both the ILRC and the library are rich with spaces intended to be owned by the students: learning and study environments that are adaptable and support individuals, pairs, collaborative, and social learning.

Outside the building, the ties that bind the project to the campus will be critical to the success of the project as a crossroads. As mentioned above, the project is joined to the library physically and programmatically to create a single 24/7 student resource. To the west, Tech Green flanks the building. This is the primary green space on campus. The site lies on the cusp of the social and academic cores of the campus. The building is positioned in the side of a hill, with important entry points at multiple elevations. Adjacent courtyard buildings, vistas, and an existing library building of local architectural renown complicate the site and massing planning approaches.

The breadth of disciplines and programs housed in the building reflect the concept of collecting programs together to form a coherent whole. The complicated physical site, geographically central to the campus, augments both the critical nature of the project to Georgia Tech’s future, and the concept of linkages as key planning instruments. In summary, as President Clough identified, the project and the future campus look for the spaces in-between, where connections are made, surprises are discovered, mistakes transform into invention, and unpredictable advancements occur.

Application-focused learning outcomes:

1. Building consensus across traditional institutional boundaries (departmental, funding, faculty/administrative, students, etc) in the interest of advancing student-centered learning environments that address today’s interdisciplinary learning needs.
2. Moving through the process: visioning, mission definition, strategic planning, programming, concept design, and funding.
3. Building as campus crossroads, how do you make a building project more than a building? How do you think outside the boundaries of the walls to insure that a building impacts its precinct, that the precinct impacts the campus, and that the ripple effects are felt throughout?



Richard M. Jones, AIA, NCARB, LEED
Senior Associate
Perry Dean Rogers Partners | Architects
177 Milk Street
Suite 7
Boston, MA 02109
617.423.0100, x261
rickj@perrydean.com

Howard S. Wertheimer, AIA, LEED AP
Director
Capital Planning and Space Management
Georgia Institute of Technology
Lyman Hall, Room 125
Atlanta, GA 30332-0690
404.385.7604
howard.wertheimer@spaceplan.gatech.edu

