

Next-Generation Learning Environments

Sue Wittenoom

DEGW Asia Pacific

Sue Wittenoom, Director, Australia and New Zealand, DEGW Asia Pacific
Originally from Perth, Sue brings 25 years experience in property roles in Sydney across architecture, project and program management and property advisory services. She joined DEGW in 2008 after 14 years with the Lend Lease Group.

DEGWs global Learning Environments team works across academic, community and workplace learning settings. DEGWs Learning Landscape SM approach recognises that learning happens everywhere on campus and considers the full range of spaces for learning. The groups planning process is built around user research and is driven by interactive forecasting rather than standards.

Sues recent learning environments experience has included master planning roles for UTS and Redlands, Sydney. She has led the planning and briefing processes for new buildings in health and research that bring different groups together to create a new organisational alliance focused on collaboration and innovation

Models for the design of learning spaces are evolving rapidly. The learning commons concept is now a well understood model for a work environment that elevates group work and engages technology. While the accumulated knowledge of the commons era is still relevant for the design of the next-generation of learning spaces, it fails to provide direction for the new modes of interaction, iteration and invention that new technologies foster.

Today's learners are mobile and connected; they are more visual and experiential learners; and they have high expectations for learning spaces and services. They've grown up in a participatory culture, characterised by deep social connectedness and mass customisation. They operate in an environment with low barriers to participation, where almost everybody creates and shares, and where peer-to-peer learning is strong.

The academic community needs new models for next-generation technology-rich learning spaces that extend the model of the early learning commons to enable the emergence of new kinds of learning environments. Teaching practices are increasingly focused around assignments that assume or prescribe collaborative work – aligning academia more closely with commerce as team-based problem solving emerges as a key competency in successful organisations. Campus settings need to shift, and campus planners need to plan for the full range of physical and virtual spaces in which learning, interaction and discovery take place.

This presentation will explore the development of a model for the design of next-generation learning environments which is being sponsored by the US Institute of Museum and Library Services. The DEGW Learning Futures team is collaborating with North Carolina State University and Brightspot on a two-year project to create a model for planning, operating and evaluating next-generation, technology-rich learning environments.

There are three components to the project: a process-oriented roadmap, a practical kit of parts for a range of new space types, and assembly instructions for use by institutions in planning their own technology-rich learning spaces. The online toolkit will be launched in November 2012. Throughout the year the prototype online resource is freely available to help gather feedback on the tools and resources under development. This session will highlight how institutions can beta-test tools and contribute to the effort to build a useful community resource through open and iterative development.