

The Learning Studio: Communicating through Digital Media

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Mission Statement

The Learning Studio seeks to provide students and faculty with the expertise, training, and technology they need to communicate effectively in the 21st century.

Proposed Partners

Digital Media Center – podcast recording and editing available to students / faculty

Media Collections – A / V services and resources relocated from basement of Library

Speaking Center – student tutoring and practice facilities relocated from Don Morris

Core Values

- Support 21st Century Vision and Core Curriculum commitments to engage our students in more effective speaking and group presentations.
- Design studio environment where tools and expertise meet creativity and collaboration.
- Make core services and technology available to all students and faculty on campus.
- Work alongside partners to help shape messages for impact in changing world.
- Build on Learning Commons success at designing inviting spaces for producing quality academic work and rich, creative community.

Proposal Summary

In recent years, the ways university students learn have changed. Responding to new technologies, new styles of communication, and the changing nature of the teacher-student relationship, students now experience college life in new ways. In response to these changes, many universities have sought to equip students for independent and collaborative learning as they contribute to wider conversations on and beyond the campus. The newly designed ACU Learning Commons responds to these changes, seeking to reclaim the library's place as the university's intellectual center.

– A Library for the Twenty-First Century: Learning Commons Proposal, Fall 2004

In 2009, just five years after the initial Learning Commons vision was drafted, and two semesters into the ACU Connected mobile learning initiative, our chief work remains responding to change. Technologies undreamt of in 2004 now shape the ways we communicate, create, and collaborate. Opportunities to “contribute to wider conversations on and beyond the campus” present themselves on a weekly basis. Yet the tools and assistance to meet these opportunities are often strung out across campus or tied to facilities within particular departments. The ACU Learning Studio will bring together expertise, training, and technology to

support each step in the communication process. From the first stages, students will work with graduate-student tutors in the Speaking Center to help refine their message, from topic selection to delivery. Media Services staff from the Library will guide student access and responsible use of analog and digital media resources. Finally, Digital Media Center specialists will help students make effective use of audio and video tools to craft and publish their message.

Shared multi-use spaces will serve as the heart of the Learning Studio, providing rooms for students to sit down with tutors, record practice speeches, or develop original media for projects, presentations, or portfolios. Increasingly, we believe these spaces will also serve to record interviews and research that showcase on-campus expertise and innovation.

The increased emphasis on speaking in the new Core Curriculum report, “Building a 21st Century Education,” will require a renewed commitment to support for speakers in a range of fields and in a growing variety of media. At the same time, the implementation of the core curriculum itself, encompassing dozens of course redesigns, calls for a fresh look at student engagement and the way mobile media can support new forms of teaching and learning. Trained faculty from across the university will need technological as well as pedagogical support as they develop new strategies to communicate most effectively to twenty-first century learners.

We believe that these partners share a common focus as we seek to make students more critical consumers and effective creators of media messages. This is the crucial transition at the heart of the mobile learning and core curriculum initiatives, moving education from information transmission to active testing and creation. In its first few years of existence, the Learning Commons has proven an essential partner with classroom faculty in this transition. The new Learning Studio will build on these foundations, extending these partnerships to support “new styles of communication” available to innovative students and faculty.

How does Learning Studio support the 21st Century Vision?

The Learning Studio is one of several innovative projects that support the university’s mobile learning initiative and the new general education core. As such, the Studio provides a curricular laboratory for the campus as we explore ways to inspire more engaged and invested student learning.

The Studio provides pedagogical support for faculty integrating assignments that assess content mastery through team-based learning, presentations, or media products. Our partners support students with timely practical and technical expertise as they invest themselves more fully in their education, honing new talents in new styles of communication. These represent the “enduring core values” at the heart of this new vision of teaching and learning at ACU, and as such, represents a strategic opportunity to change the face of Higher Education in the twenty-first century.

Phase One: Existing Facilities and Staff

The Learning Studio partners have outlined a bold vision; in the short term, progress can be made with investments in necessary equipment that can be rolled out in current facilities with current staff. Phase One equipment would focus on tools that serve 70% of faculty and students in basic audio and video editing. The following revised budget prioritizes machines for both recording and editing as well as two “proof-of-concept” recording rooms located in the Speaking Center and the Digital Media Center.

Learning Studio Overview

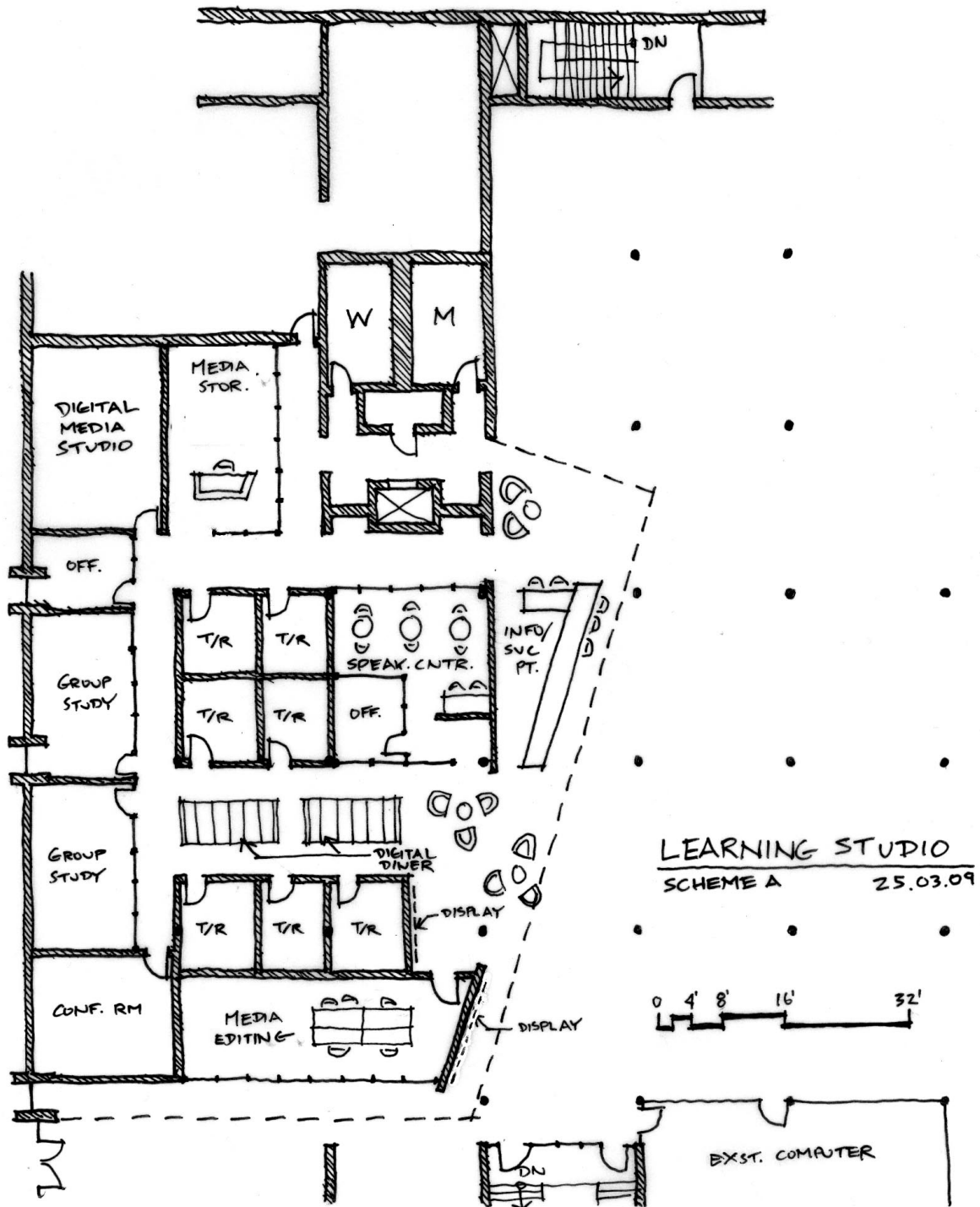
COUNT	PRICE	SUBTOTAL	
2	\$2,405	\$4,810	Recording/Tutoring Rooms
5	\$5,405	\$27,025	Editing Workstations
0	\$17,150	\$0	Digital Recording Studios
	\$14,340	\$14,340	Other Hardware
	TOTAL	\$46,175	

Phase Two: Expansion of Facilities and Staff

As capital investments become available to complete this vision, we believe two things are essential: a central location with sufficient contiguous space for each of the Learning Studio partners, and key personnel for both student training and support and faculty projects initially focused on the Core Curriculum. Regarding staffing, we see commitments of some of the technology tied to support personnel. Once the expertise is in place to make regular use of higher-end tools, we advise circling back to outfit the complete Digital Media Studio. Renovation and furniture investments for the broader studio could also wait until this phase.

In regards to location, the Library has led discussions for the last year on where it could place such a facility. Mark Tucker and other library representatives see the role of digital collections increasing rapidly and are eager to work alongside other Learning Studio partners as we seek to serve students in their media. Working with a building consultant, they propose utilizing space on the top floor of the library as an extension of the Learning Commons. The following preliminary sketch is a product of early conversations with the partners.

Whatever the timeline, we agree that now is the time to make digital media tools more accessible to faculty and students across campus.



* Stairs coming up from Learning Commons at bottom. Current plan moves periodicals processing, government documents and maps down to current A/V area, to avoid shifting significant numbers of volumes from top floor at this stage.