

Empowering Students to Design Their Own Futures

How SRH University's new campus in Berlin reflects their innovative approach to learning

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SRH University's new campus in the lively Neukölln neighborhood of Berlin is a vibrant microcosm of the city that surrounds it. Opened in November 2024, the campus is defined by a dynamic ecosystem of flexible spaces designed to optimally support learning and working.

The original SRH Berlin campus featured a classic layout in a traditional office building. In an increasingly global and complex world, forward-thinking SRH University recognized that the old campus was a barrier to achieving their vision for the future.

Beginning in 2021, SRH and Steelcase embarked on an ambitious project to create an agile and inspiring space that supports collaboration and innovation.

“We had the great chance of a lifetime to rethink our work environments and the spaces for learning and teaching and of course for socializing.”

DR. THORSTEN BAGSCHIK | Managing Director at SRH

The Project Beginnings: Laying the Groundwork for Modern Learning

SRH University's philosophy centers around empowering students to design their own futures. “Our focus is less on teaching and more on learning,” explains Dr. Benjamin Schwenn, marketing and brand management professor at SRH. “We see ourselves more as mentors than as professors in the traditional sense.”

At the original campus in Berlin, there was a disconnect between this philosophy and the space concept. “The staff worked in siloed offices with minimal exchange between departments,” explains Marika Graupe-Fröhlich, SRH campus manager and change management director.

Steelcase and SRH worked closely to define what the new space should look like. People were at the heart of the concept evolution process, with extensive workshops to understand how SRH staff worked and what they needed to help them and their students to thrive.

“Steelcase took our goals very seriously, to ensure that the new concept considered the needs of many different people.”

The outcome of this process was an open plan campus concept to support diverse working and learning modes. The new concept was designed to break down traditional silos between departments, staff, and students and create a community environment where creativity and collaboration could flourish.

“The fusion of faculties in the spaces was developed together with all the staff, professors, and employees. From the beginning, this was regarded as a chance, and not only a challenge.”

DR. THORSTEN BAGSCHIK | Managing Director at SRH

Engaging People During the Change Management Process

One of the biggest challenges throughout the transformation was initial resistance to an open plan without individually owned offices. Experiencing the possibilities of an open concept firsthand was a turning point for employees in the process.

“Visiting the Steelcase Learning + Innovation Center in Munich was an ‘aha’ moment. We saw what working and learning can be like in the 21st century, and the role that space plays. Steelcase was far more than a supplier, but actually a companion through this process.”

DR. BENJAMIN SCHWENN | Marketing and Brand Management Professor at SRH

Marika Graupe-Fröhlich describes the process as challenging but rewarding. “Over time, the staff embraced the change,” she explained. SRH, supported by Steelcase, helped employees adapt to the new work environment. “Steelcase made sure the spaces were expertly designed to support what we needed,” Graupe-Fröhlich emphasizes. “They also supported us in making sure the SRH employees understood the space and could use it to its full capacity.”

Ralf Freter, workplace consultant at Steelcase, describes SRH’s open-mindedness through the process. “I was so impressed by SRH’s courage to challenge traditional thought patterns and go on this journey without knowing exactly where it would end.”

“I see SRH as a pioneer in the field of learning environments.”

RALF FRETER | Workplace Consultant at Steelcase

The New SRH Space: A Learning Ecosystem Primed for the Future

The campus offers a diverse range of spaces that support quiet work, collaborative meetings, socializing, and well-being. Varying levels of acoustic and visual privacy allow people to choose the environment based on their needs. Cozy nooks provide retreats to relax and rejuvenate. The once-feared shared desking concept for staff has proven successful, with lockers for storing personal belongings and strategically placed enclosed spaces for calls or confidential conversations.

Flexible classrooms are equipped with mobile furniture that allow for adaptable learning situations. A peek into a music classroom reveals students and professors jamming together. Across the hall, a hydraulics seminar class is underway. The agile spaces support whatever students need to collaborate, study, innovate, and succeed. “The settings are more relaxed, which facilitates open dialogue and helps us feel at ease to ask questions,” adds Sophia, a marketing management master’s student.

Professors and students can be seen interacting in the open cafe space and on the terrace, and the new Service Hub offers a large, designated area for students to seek support from staff. Two iconic spaces – the Cube and the 5th floor – are particularly beloved by students. The Cube offers a huge open performance hall as well as sheltered areas for individual focused study, bean bags for relaxing, and white boards and couches for collaborative brainstorming. The 5th floor features a vast, inspiring space that students can use to study, work on a group project, or simply meet with friends. Communications design student Levente explains, “You really feel that it’s been created for us. The 5th floor captures the spirit of our university and the community.”

Bringing the Brand to Life: SRH as a 3D Experience

The “Brand in Space” concept for SRH University was developed by the Berlin-based branding and design agency dan pearlman, under the creative direction of Prof. Marcus Fischer. Building on the visual identity and corporate design created by Munich agency Martin et Karczinski, dan pearlman translated SRH’s brand into a fully immersive spatial experience.

Every material, surface, color, and form was carefully selected to reflect the university’s values—openness, innovation, and sustainability—while creating a cohesive environment that supports both learning and working.

The result is a campus where the brand is an integral part of the experience. From the curved architectural lines that echo the SRH logo to the custom lighting and refurbished furnishings, the space communicates a strong sense of identity and belonging. The Berlin campus also incorporates local design elements, giving it a distinctive character while remaining unmistakably SRH.

“The brand has to speak to everyone who enters—students, professors, visitors. It’s not just seen, it’s felt. Materials, colors, shapes, and lighting come together to create a three-dimensional experience that says: this is SRH Berlin.”

NICOLE GIETZ | former Workplace Consultant and Managing Board Member at dan pearlman until November 2024

Shaping the Future of Education

SRH University stands as a beacon of innovation and community, attracting students from around the globe eager to be part of a dynamic learning experience. “The fact that we are still changing and improving shows how resilient and adaptable the new concept is,” says Marika Graupe-Fröhlich.

“What is really powerful is the mingling of the disciplines.” We have basically created an ecosystem of learners, teachers, and employees which is unparalleled - and really cool.”

DR. THORSTEN BAGSCHIK | Managing Director at SRH

As SRH University looks to the future, its new Berlin campus is a catalyst for shaping the workforce of tomorrow with flexible spaces designed to empower students and staff to thrive in a constantly changing world.