

Supporting Wellbeing for Learners & Faculty



Higher Education Is at a Wellbeing Inflection Point

Students are under increasing strain and faculty are burning out from rising pressures, making wellbeing a campus-wide challenge for institutions.

Students and faculty move through a wide range of experiences each day — learning, teaching, collaborating, socializing, focusing and recharging. Their wellbeing is shaped by each of these experiences and by the environments where they happen.

Higher education institutions have expanded programs and services that support wellbeing, but many campus spaces were not designed with wellbeing as a primary consideration. As expectations around mental health evolve, there is an opportunity to think differently about how the physical environment contributes to the daily experience of students and faculty.

The places where people learn, work, connect and restore are deeply interconnected, and understanding how those spaces influence wellbeing can help institutions create more supportive and effective campus experiences.

To understand how space can better support wellbeing today, Steelcase Learning conducted human-centered research using multiple qualitative and quantitative methods.

- Research methods included:
- Literature review
 - Interviews and surveys
 - Observational research
 - Space assessments

“Wellbeing as a student means being taken care of, understanding what’s going on and not feeling like I’m out of place. It’s feeling like I belong where I am.”

College Student
Higher Education Institution



Understanding Wellbeing in Learning

Our research revealed six insights about the relationship between wellbeing and the campus environment.

Finding 1: Wellbeing remains a destination rather than embedded into daily environments.

Dedicated wellbeing services and spaces play an important role, but their impact is limited when support is disconnected from the everyday campus experience.

Finding 2: Classrooms prioritize efficiency over the human experience.

Learning environments are often optimized for instruction and utilization, overlooking the physical, cognitive and social needs that shape engagement.

Finding 3: Study spaces lack the privacy and comfort needed for performance and recovery.

Students need environments that support focus and restoration, yet many spaces offer limited control over noise, privacy and comfort.

1 in 3
students report struggling with anxiety or depression.

1 in 2
faculty say their job has negatively impacted their mental wellbeing.

(The Healthy Minds Network)



Finding 5: Restoration spaces inadequately support the different ways students recover.

Students restore in different ways, but many campus environments offer a narrow range of settings for decompression, reflection and reset.

Finding 6: Faculty lack spaces to connect and recharge.

Faculty wellbeing is often overlooked, leaving many without environments that support community, respite and meaningful connection.

“I would really appreciate a sense of community, a sense of camaraderie and togetherness. I have none of that today.”

Adjunct Professor
Higher Education Institution



Insights in Action

We applied these insights across a range of typical campus spaces that students and faculty use. While there are a wide variety of applications, these are just a few of the many developed that showcase our insights into wellbeing experiences.



Products That Make It Work

Orangebox Away From the Desk
Coalesse Ensemble
Jenny Chair
Brody Lounge
Coalesse Potrero415 Table
Orangebox Cubb Barstool
B-Free Beam
Thread Hub
Apprise Coffee Table
Coalesse Await Freestanding Table
Coalesse Lagunitas Personal Table
Elbrook Personal Table

Collaborative Student Lounge

A flexible social setting that balances connection, focus and restoration through choice, comfort and varying levels of privacy.

Support Multiple Modes

A mix of communal, small-group and individual settings allows students to choose how they engage throughout the day.

Create Privacy

Partially enclosed settings provide refuge for focus and restoration while maintaining a connection to the larger community.

Provide Choice and Control

A range of postures, seating types and levels of visibility helps individuals select the environment that best fits their needs.



- Products That Make It Work**
- Campfire Lounge
 - Shortcut Chair
 - Tenor Chair
 - Simple Table
 - Elbrook Table
 - Verb Flip-Top Table
 - Flex Table
 - Flex Media Cart
 - Flex Team Cart
 - AMQ Hanging Panels

Flexible, Inclusive Classroom
A classroom designed to support diverse abilities, instructional models and modes of participation.

Support Inclusive Participation
A variety of seating options and learning settings accommodates different comfort levels, abilities and learning preferences.

Enable Equitable Access
Accessible pathways, adaptable furniture and integrated technology help ensure every student can fully participate.

Adapt for Multiple Learning Modes
Mobile furniture and technology enable quick transitions between individual, group, and whole-class instruction.

Empower Choice and Agency
Students can select the posture, location and setting that best support their focus, comfort and engagement.

Let's Get in Touch

To find out more about solutions + spaces that inspire a life of learning, visit SteelcaseLearning.com

Next Steps

Engage with an expert for our full research summary and countless design thought starters.

Experience our curated spaces and solutions for learning and work through an in-person or virtual tour of our showrooms.

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