

STUDENT COMPETITION

Exploring Concepts for the Optimization of Space

About the competition

The University of Alberta aspires to create and support optimal environments for teaching, learning, research and student success. Effective space and infrastructure are essential, and as an institution, we need to work together as stewards of these resources.

The U of A has the most gross floor area per Full Load Equivalent (FLE) of any U15 post-secondary institution in Canada and the maintenance and operations of these structures and buildings occur with fewer resources and funding. We can no longer afford the volume of assets we have - both financially and environmentally - and it's increasingly important that we direct resources to enable continued excellence in teaching, research, and student success.

The institution is interested in engaging with and learning more about student perspectives on ways space could be better and more optimally used. The intent of this competition is to provide opportunity for engagement, exploration, and creativity from the student perspective, while encouraging students to learn from navigating solutions for real institutional challenges. Furthermore, as we look to optimize our spaces on campus, this exercise provides an opportunity to reimagine spaces that support the learning experience of students while still ensuring long-term financially sustainable practices.

Who

The competition encourages interdisciplinarity with the three primary options for engagement being an open call to all students, including graduate students. Students can work alone, or in groups of up to six people, and respond to a pre-identified project briefing.

The Competition Evaluation Team includes Verna Yiu, Joe Doucet, Andrew Sharman, Stanford Blade, Carrie Smith, Monisha Vinod (GSA), Joannie Fogue (SU), Kevin Friese and Florence Glanfield or Nella Sajlovic.

What / Where

This project focuses on potential programmatic and spatial opportunities within University Commons, an adaptive reuse renovation project of the historical 1922 Medical building, which later became the Dentistry Pharmacy building.

Originally built in 1922, University Commons is a historic centre piece to the University of Alberta, representing the synergistic life of the university, connecting students with not just the surrounding buildings, but the land it resides on, land located on traditional territory of Cree, Blackfoot, Métis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, and Ojibway/Saulteaux/Anishinaabe nations: lands that are now know as part of Treaties 6, 7, and 8 and homeland of the Métis. The University of Alberta respects the sovereignty, lands, histories, languages, knowledge systems, and cultures of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Nations. The history of the university as an institution of learning, collaboration and pursuit of excellence, and its prehistory and connection to the land is vital to its continued relevance, retaining and enhancing the importance of all communities in their equity, diversity, and inclusivity.

As the building steps forward into its next 100 years of life, and is renewed into the new University Commons, the University strives for durability through a focus on sustainable design and operational practices, integrative and optimal programmes, and delight through creative design and innovative placemaking.

Aspirational Goal

Participants are proposing solutions to address changing scenarios for future program developments and the long-term sustainability of the University Commons as a piece of the campus fabric. With a growing student population, this building rejuvenation offers a wonderful opportunity to reimagine how our student spaces can better support changing needs while ensuring maximum utilization to enable long-term sustainable spaces. Presented solutions should reflect not only what occupies the building but also how the involved spaces support student success and experiences and create lasting institutional memories. Consider, too, the relevance of these spaces to the larger university community.

The main considerations for Option 3 are to create a space of refuge to ensure student health and wellness.

OPTION 3: Level 2 - Calming Room	
Background	<p>A recent National Survey of Student Engagement points to the centrality of space in the student experience, and clearly indicates that expanding and/or improving the quality of support services (e.g. counseling) was a top priority for our students. A calming area is included in University Commons that would provide a quiet, comfortable space for students to reset when they're feeling anxious, angry or overwhelmed. Essential mental health support would also be available nearby.</p> <p>At a time when the U of A is looking to optimize its space, it is a good time to explore how to create a calming space that provides access to essential mental health supports, offers privacy when needed, and yet encourages effective utilization.</p>
Objectives	<p>To create a space that is available for any student who needs to reset or access</p>

and Goals	mental health support. The space would be safe and private, while encouraging maximum utilization - it should be a known, easily accessed center.
Target Audience	The space is intended to address the sensitive needs of students at risk or who just need a mental break.
Scope of Project	This space is located on the southwest corner of the second level of the 1922 portion of the building. It is near the newly opened pedway to South Academic Building (SAB). The identified space is 121 m ² . The exterior walls include large period windows with good views. The ceilings are high and are made of wood; and, there are some brick walls within the space. The intended entry is off of a main corridor.
Constraints	Submissions should consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● building systems supplied in the first phase of construction, ● applicable building codes, including occupancy allowances and physical and social accessibility, ● security of technology, equipment and furnishings, and ● durability of the design intent.
Opportunities	This is an opportunity to create a space where students can seek and find safety and calm.

Competition Resources

- [Building Location on Campus](#)
- [Floor Plan](#)
- [Dimensioned Space Plan](#)
- [Material Palette Package](#)
- [360° videos of space](#)
- [Executive Summary for the Design Development Report for Phase 1 University Commons](#)
- [Watercolour Rendering](#) (Credit: GEC Architecture / Michael McCann)

Deliverables

- Entrants will submit a Google Slide presentation with a maximum of 20 slides. The presentation will act as the venue to hold whatever visuals are deemed helpful to the message (i.e. graphic communication, scanned hand drawn sketches, photos of 3D or physical models, modified photos or links to videos that total no more than 20 viewing minutes of viewing time.
- The presentation should be self-explanatory, and include:
 - The student(s)' names, year of study, program of study, Faculty and Department
 - The student-focused space they selected
 - Any involved assumptions
 - The conceptual design problem, and issues they are solving for
 - Any research findings and/or advice they are incorporating into their solution

- What their proposed solution is, why it's desirable for users, what the operational model is, consideration of how it meets the requirements Alberta Building Code, and how it helps solve the goals of space optimization (see Rubric below for Evaluation Criteria)
- A high level approximate, order of magnitude budget
- Why students would benefit from their solution

Outcome Expectations

- All entries will be reviewed by the evaluation committee and will receive feedback regardless of whether or not they are chosen.
- Winners will have their pitch profiled across social media and the campus community.
- Winning ideas may be modified to align with mandatory restrictions, such as Alberta Building Code and Safety, and/or for factors that are not currently known or emerge throughout the implementation process.

Evaluation Rubric

Proposals will be evaluated by the following criteria and weighting:

Weight	Criteria
35%	Effectiveness in Meeting Space Optimization Goals (what is it about the space that can uphold high levels of utilization, and/or is efficient from a space and user perspective?)
35%	Desirability for Students (the aesthetics and functionality of the space that makes it a desirable location)
10%	Durability (the ability for the solution to last at least 10 years before major repair or replacement is required)
10%	Operational Viability (the ability for the solution to operate, who or what is required for it to be successful?)
10%	Implementation Viability (the University Commons project team’s ability to interpret and implement the solution(s) proposed, with consideration of Alberta Building Code, Safety, physical and social accessibility, schedule and possibly budget)

Process

Interested participants should attend an information session on Monday, February 6 from 12:00 to 1:00pm. The information session will introduce the competition options and outline the Subject Matter Experts (SME) Panel who will be available half way through the competition for questions.

The competition opens immediately after this session. Individuals or teams should register for the competition [online](#), which will be available February 6, 2023.

Participants with questions should:

- Email Joanne Bortnick, Head of Strategic Infrastructure Planning at joanne.bortnick@gmail.com.
- Monitor their email during the competition period for updates or corrections.
- Plan on attending the Check In on February 28, 2023 from 12:00 - 1:00pm in University Commons where a Subject Matter Expert (SME) panel will be available with representatives from:
 - the administrating unit for questions about the competition details,
 - the shared space task force, for questions about operating a multipurpose room,
 - dean of students, for questions about calming rooms,
 - libraries, for questions about student study space, and
 - Facilities and Operations for questions about space optimization, furniture, design, code related restrictions, and infrastructure questions.

Deadline

All submissions must be received by 4:00pm MST on Friday, March 17, 2023.

Rules for Submission

- You will submit only digital files, as outlined below. Please do not mail anything.
- Submit all files [online](#) using the form titled “Submission Materials.” This form will be accessible by February 6, 2023, the day after the competition commences.
- The person who submitted a team application should also be the one to log in, upload documents, and submit your team’s final proposal.
- One corner of every document **MUST** display your team’s name.
- **DO NOT** include any marks—other than your team name on any of the sheets you submit, either in digital or in hard copy.
- The adjudication panel will not accept or review—any supplemental diagrams or information that you do not present directly on the sheets described above under “Required Presentation Materials.”
- Notification of Receipt: You will receive an automatic email and system notification once you hit Submit, confirming that we have received your submission.

Winners will be announced March 24, 2023. Each successful student will receive a \$1500 scholarship and the students’ department will receive a \$1000 scholarship for student initiatives.