

Seminar reveals turning underused campus spaces into student collaboration areas a growing priority for campus FM

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Repurposing underutilised campus spaces into student collaboration areas is now a growing priority for higher education leaders and facilities management (FM) professionals who specialise in managing campus buildings.

That's according to the findings of last week's virtual seminar on *The Future of Campus Spaces*, hosted by leading workplace solutions provider [HubStar](#).

The online event was attended by campus planning and facilities leaders from around the world. A poll held during the discussions revealed that repurposing 10% of existing campus space as student collaboration areas is a top priority.

Student collaboration spaces are seen as crucial for fostering a sense of belonging, enhancing learning outcomes through students learning from each other, preparing students for the world of work, and encouraging diversity and wider thinking.

Creating collaborative environments can also help institutions to improve student engagement by making the campus experience more appealing to the increasing number of students who now spend more time studying from home.

Stephanie Kleim, Planning and Design Manager at Canada's Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT), told the *Future of Campus Spaces* audience how SAIT recently transformed vacant space into a student study hub with privacy pods and bookable team rooms. SAIT is a polytechnic with 40,000 students

and five million square feet of campus space.

Stephanie Kleim said: “The study hub has received nothing but positive feedback from students so far. In fact, the success was so immediate that faculty and staff now want a space like that of their own!”

During the discussions, the importance of finding the right campus location for collaboration spaces was emphasised by Chris Morett, President at Co|Here Campus and Workplace—a consultancy specialising in campus space utilisation and planning.

Chris Morett said: “It’s not just about the quantity of space; it’s about location and accessibility. Strategic placement of collaborative spaces throughout campus can significantly improve the student experience.”

Joe Harris, HubStar’s Director of Business Development, said: “It became clear during the discussions that fact-based decision-making is becoming non-negotiable for campus space optimisation. Accurate data can be fed into analytics platforms that reveal trends in space usage and identify underused areas. These insights can then empower campus FM teams to reconfigure underutilised spaces as student collaboration areas.”

While *The Future of Campus Spaces* virtual seminar re-confirmed the growing importance of accurate campus occupancy data, some attendees warned that the successful use of space utilisation data depended on how it is communicated to faculty and staff.

Satu Hyökki, Chief Campus Development Specialist at Tampere University, Finland’s second-largest university, told the audience: “Data alone doesn’t make anyone happy. You need to give context, show allocation opportunities, and explain the costs of unused space.”