“Collaborative Learning Environments; The Pros, the Cons, and the In-between”
SUNY OCC  Whitney 201 Lecture Hall

Has been transformed into the WhiTn3y Commons...
Layout of 2 New Rooms & Seating Area
WhiTn3y Commons

The upper case “T” and numeral “3” in its name are intentional. They represent Teaching, Technology and Teamwork.
Small group sharing & collaborating

To big world conversations

Students are engaged
Beware the sliding glass doors are not sound proof. To meet OSHA regulations they needed to be break away doors.
The Furniture

Huddle Chairs and Node Chairs,
The Furniture

Tables, Monitors, Connections & Outlets
Laptop Cart, The Rack & Controls
Get professors' input from the beginning

- They helped design this room
- They sat with architect, and AV company
- They met with OCC’s AV & IT Infrastructure Team before, during & after—it is an ongoing process
- They helped tweak the room once they used it & they continue to help train the new faculty
After a year of using this room we asked the teachers and the students what they liked and disliked about the room......
There’s nothing that I “dislike” about the room – but there are some things I might do differently

- Tables – 6 is probably fine, but more comfortable for four students; (Plus we can only split the monitors 4 ways)

If I could redo the whole thing,
- I’d have the two rooms equally sized.
- I would keep the small whiteboard tablets.
- I love the way the space makes the students feel. Most of them just sit a little straighter and stay more interested than they would in a conventional space.
- The whiteboard software is great. A stylus would be nice.
I just can’t write as fast with the fingertip as I can with a marker.
Another Professor’s Comments

Students occupy it in a different manner than other rooms. They interact with each other far more. Students still hover outside and watch what is going on inside.

Regarding the table size, five would be a good maximum. With six I have noticed that they sometimes break into sub-groups. Definitely not seven or higher!

I like the whiteboard software a lot, and use it a whole lot more than I would have expected.

One other point is that I wish we had put the glass wall on the other side of the columns. This would be a minor change, but would give the perception of more space inside the glass space.
Third Professor’s Comments

Things I like about W201:
• The ability to capture notes from the whiteboard and save to pdf to post on Blackboard. (we use Promethean ActivInspire)
• Getting students to work in groups is easier than in a regular classroom, where they have to physically move their chairs.
• Screens at every table: I can project slides, videos, or board notes, and students can see them from the other side of the room.

Some things I do not like about W201:
• Having students with their backs to me
• The downside of the tables: students carry on low-level conversations that they think no one outside their table can hear.
• Writing with my finger on the whiteboard is awkward,
• It was often too warm, especially by the end of the day.
• Having to enforce “no food or drink”—I understand why.
Things I thought would bother me that don’t:
Having a teacher in the next room: I almost never heard anything from next door, and when I did it didn’t detract from my class. Then again, I have not taught in the little room side, so I don’t know if it’s different.

Misc:
• I would definitely not increase the number of seats per table. Somewhere around 4 is ideal, in my opinion. More than that and not everyone working in the group is actually contributing.
• Support from AV when I’ve run into problems has been GREAT!
Students’ Comments
What do you like/dislike? What are some of the challenges to this type of learning environment? How are teachers adapting to it? How are students adapting?

Room 201 in Whitney can be described as a very sophisticated, tech savvy area. It is not like a regular classroom, it is full of technology. In our careers as business major students, the room put a “real world” aspect on us, granted we will not be doing business deals or transactions in a college classroom. The room is equipped with various monitors, outlets, HDMI’s, speakers, and even has a stock monitor built in timer that updates all the stock information!

Although the room is advanced, professors show no confusion in using the room which makes it comfortable for students. It is an interesting and fun way students can interact and learn differently in W201 rather than a regular classroom.
Other Students’ Comments

* In my honest opinion, this newly upgraded room adds character and something new & fresh to the Onondaga C.C. campus.
* What I liked the most were the displays on the desk & the touch screen board, it made it a lot easier to follow the curriculum.
* I think the students are adapting well by learning to use their group members as tools and resources. I think this room and teaching style is much more helpful than a traditional classroom.
* My professors were able to post the notes online after class- that helped us to study at home.
* The only thing I would change about it is just change up seating a little bit so everyone can face the main board and not just the screens by the tables.
* Being in that cool room makes us want to go to class because everything just seems more interesting.
* PROS:
Highly effective collaborating space. The smart TV is a very nice touch to add to the learning. The room seems to have endless capabilities, and you can keep adding to it if you want to.

* CONS:
Can be pretty noisy at times, with outside noises finding their way in. The space seems like it needs to be filled up more. Maybe try to use something other than glass walls to give some sense of privacy.

* I like the glass room better than the big room. I hate the chairs in the big room, but I like that there are tables so we are in groups. I like the blue desk in the glass room a lot better. I do like having the interactive boards in the class! In the big room having the screens at each table is nice too, but there are a lot more distractions in the big room that I don't like. I also don't like that I can hear everything the other professor is saying in the other class. Overall the rooms are cool, but have a lot of distractions.
Students’ Comments from Other Class

GLASS ROOM
**PROS:** I liked chairs, very comfy, Touch screen boards are very interactive, nice design

**CONS:**
Sometimes we can hear people in the other room, it can be very distracting, It gets very hot; its a small room with a lot of people

BIG ROOM
**PROS:**
Table with notebooks can be very helpful for some of the classes touch screen boards, like the wall street news, good for group work

**CONS:**
Sometimes we can hear the people in the glass room, it can be distracting especially if they are watching a video
Reminders:

* Get professors input from the beginning – they helped design this room and they helped tweak the room once they started using it.

* Train key faculty members, check in on them often in the beginning to make sure they feel comfortable with the technology. Have them train their departments, but check in with all.

* Get IT on board from the beginning

* For more information visit the website: