

INTERDISCIPLINARY INTERACTION IN AN ACADEMIC COMMUNITY  
AN INTERIM GRADUATE STUDENT CENTER AS A PRIORITY FOR COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Report and Recommendations  
of the Committee on Campus Planning and Physical Development  
of the Columbia University Senate

SEPTEMBER 1, 2010



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## Executive Summary

THE Committee on Campus Planning and Physical Development of the University Senate (hereinafter “the Committee”) investigated a proposed interim Graduate Student Center within the boundaries of its mandate. The Committee found that an interim Graduate Student Center would be aligned with and would measurably advance Columbia University’s institutional mission to expand an interdisciplinary approach to teaching, research, and scholarship. Faculty who are strongly identified with graduate education broadly and enthusiastically endorsed such a center, noting that it would promote and cultivate the sense of academic community that is a critical component of a comprehensive graduate education. The conspicuous lack of such a center at Columbia, as compared with our peers, places the University at a competitive disadvantage.

Students were equally enthusiastic about the prospect of a Graduate Student Center. A survey conducted by the Graduate School Advisory Council (hereinafter “GSAC”) found that 77% of students did not feel that they were part of a close-knit academic community, a response that we attribute to the lack of a dedicated community space. There are a number of departmental lounges on the Morningside and Medical campuses, though they are unevenly distributed. In addition, departmental lounges, as their name implies, neither promote interdisciplinary interaction nor offer the programming support of a school-wide Graduate Student Center.

The Graduate Faculties Lounge (hereinafter “GFL”) in 301 Philosophy is insufficient for several reasons as a space for graduate students. First, the GFL is not purposed for the use of graduate students. Second, the GFL is a highly impractical space, as it is neither divisible nor multifunctional. In particular, no space for TAs’ office hours is available, a serious obstacle to the successful pedagogical interactions integral to graduate education. Third, the GFL lacks any audiovisual technology for presentations. Though it works well for receptions and other large-scale events, the GFL is not an effective working and social space for graduate students.

The Committee also noted that the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (hereinafter “GSAS”) is the only graduate school at Columbia, as well as the only arts and sciences graduate program in our peer group, without a dedicated space of its own. While taking note of the promise of space in Uris Hall by 2017, the Committee stresses the importance of finding interim space now, as seven years represents the lifespan of a Ph.D. The negative impact of departmental moves to UTS space in the last two years is already deeply felt. An interim Graduate Student Center now is necessary, to build academic community, but also to rebuild an academic community that once existed but has since been dispersed.

Space has been made available recently, notably by the closing of four science libraries and a shelled brownstone on 114<sup>th</sup> Street. The Committee investigated all of these spaces, but declined to officially endorse any of them, in the interests of good planning practice. However, the Committee does note that space that satisfies all the broad criteria of a Graduate Student Center does exist and is presently available. Ready funds and solid fundraising prospects are also available for immediate commitment to an interim Graduate Student Center.

In summary, the Committee has concluded:

- The Graduate Student Center is fully aligned with and will measurably advance Columbia's institutional and academic mission, by promoting interdisciplinary interaction in an academic community.
- The Graduate Student Center will protect and advance Columbia's competitive standing vis-à-vis our peers.
- For the reasons above, faculty comprehensively endorse the creation of a Graduate Student Center.
- For the reasons above, students enthusiastically endorse the creation of a Graduate Student Center.
- Space is available that broadly fits the physical needs of a Graduate Student Center of approximately 2,500-3,000 square feet. While not strictly within the mandate of the Committee to decide, a Graduate Student Center should contain, in general, a combination of large and small spaces, while retaining the GFL for major events.
- The interim nature of the proposed Graduate Student Center would not deprive any department of any long-term space allocation.
- Funds from GSAS reserves with other fundraising prospects are ready to be committed immediately for the creation of such a center.
- The preservation of the Graduate Student Center as a key priority throughout the leadership transition of GSAS indicates strong and wide-ranging institutional support.
- The availability of space requiring mild to moderate renovation, and the conventional design parameters of a Graduate Student Center represent a highly efficient and highly effective use of both space and financial resources.

The Committee believes that the Graduate Student Center is a rare instance where there is full alignment among the priorities of the university, the faculty, and students, and where there is not only a crystallized vision, but also funds available to realize it – a view shared by its Senate co-sponsors. In such an instance, swift action is highly desirable to capture the momentum of good intentions and good ideas, and capitalize on available opportunities. The Committee concludes this report by respectfully requesting that the University Senate endorse and recommend the creation of a Graduate Student Center.

## Mandate and Purpose

THE Committee took care to define both the scope of the question it was investigating in this report and its recommendations within the boundaries set both by its mandate and that of the University Senate.<sup>1</sup> Four specific provisions are reproduced below (with emphasis added):

- The University Senate “shall be a policy-making body which may consider all matters of **University-wide concern**, all matters affecting **more than one faculty or school.**”
- “The primary mandate of [the Committee] is **to review and comment** upon the processes for planning, reviewing, assigning priorities and implementing the University’s physical development to **assess how they impact the academic mission of the University.**”
- The Committee shall consider “plans and projects to change **space available for specific schools** and departments as well as **space for the well-being of the University community.**”
- The Committee “may also advise the administration and the Trustees on **faculty, student and staff concerns, priorities and particular projects** related to campus planning and physical development.”

Accordingly, it is appropriate for the Committee to assess matters specifically relating to the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, which grants all Columbia Ph.D.s to students in a range of Columbia schools, including the traditional arts and sciences departments, Engineering, Architecture, Business, Social Work, Teachers College, Public Health, Nursing, Dentistry, and Physicians and Surgeons.<sup>2</sup>

It is further appropriate for the Committee to assess, in general terms, how a Graduate Student Center may impact the academic mission of the University. Finally, it is appropriate for the Committee to advise on, advocate on behalf of, and offer recommendations for the particular project of a Graduate Student Center.

## Academic and Institutional Perspectives

COLUMBIA University in the City of New York faces the beginning of the twenty-first century with some of the same advantages it enjoyed at the beginning of the twentieth – a

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<sup>1</sup> University Statutes §23 and Senate By-Laws §1(h)(4). Accessible at [http://www.columbia.edu/cu/senate/topbar\\_pages/defining\\_docs/definingdocs05\\_rev.html](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/senate/topbar_pages/defining_docs/definingdocs05_rev.html).

<sup>2</sup> References are frequently made throughout this report to GSAS. This is for terminological and technical consistency only, as all Ph.D.s and non-professional Masters’ degrees are granted through GSAS. A Graduate Student Center is intended for the use of *all* graduate students.

distinguished faculty, a major impending expansion, and the challenge of new discoveries as well as new methods for making them. Just as the turn of the twentieth century saw the transformation of a small college into a research-focused university, so too are we in the midst of a transformation, in which our decisions will determine whether Columbia emerges as a leader of an academic world increasingly international in scope, and interdisciplinary in nature.

In his 2002 inaugural address, President Lee Carroll Bollinger offered an assessment of Columbia's strengths as the "quintessential great urban university," but also of the challenges it faced. He singled out two:

*[A] great university will figure out how to deal with one of the most important questions of higher education, namely how to bridge the intellectual strengths of the health sciences and professions and the fundamental science disciplines in Arts and Sciences...*

*Another critical area is the phenomenon of globalization. The growing reach of and the interrelationships between modern communications, economic development, disease and public health policies, education, agricultural methods, poverty, terrorism, international law, religious and regional conflict, and environmental degradation are of immense complexity and importance.*

The actions President Bollinger has taken since his arrival amply reflect our university's commitment to collaboration among departments and schools. Although these units remain at the heart of academic endeavor, the interrelatedness of problems we will face with increasing frequency demands interdisciplinary study and solutions achievable only building links across and through academic walls first erected in the century before last.

President Bollinger's comments on globalization are, in addition, an important reminder of the role of our international students, who are strongly represented in the graduate schools. As a global university, we must provide a focal point that enables international graduate students in particular to meet people from other countries. It is a proud hallmark of the American educational system that we concern ourselves with the academic, as well as the socially and intellectually holistic well-being of our students.

President Bollinger's appointments have reflected these new institutional priorities. One of the most notable is Nicholas Bernard Dirks, Executive Vice President for Arts and Sciences, who leads faculties serving six schools. Dirks is not simply a believer, but a proven practitioner in interdisciplinary – and often ground-breaking – academic leadership. Columbia

College Today's May/June 2006 issue profiled his accomplishments in the Department of Anthropology:

*He continued to promote interdisciplinary work when he came to Columbia in 1997 to chair the anthropology department. "I was asked to rebuild a strong department that had fallen on hard times," Dirks says. "It was thrilling to help rebuild this department, founded by Franz Boas. We hired people from Michigan, all over the country, and Africa and Asia. We created a department that is hugely interdisciplinary that we think is now one of the top three in the United States, which befits the tradition of Columbia."*

*"He was the crucial leader," says Brinkley Messick, one of the professors recruited by Dirks 10 years ago and now chair of the anthropology department. "Several of the new appointments were of very prominent figures who were not anthropologists by training but who were interdisciplinary in their work. The program as it now stands has the stamp of Dirks' vision and effort."*

Since his appointment, Executive Vice President Dirks has fought to promote his vision for increasing interdisciplinary activity in teaching, research, and scholarship, writing in his first letter to the faculty scarcely a month after taking office on October 21, 2004:

*As I take on this new position, I am committed to continuing the tradition of this office in supporting the excellence of our departments, programs, and schools, since these are the core units that have over the years earned our international reputation and do most of the hard work of teaching, research, and scholarship. **However, I am equally committed to finding new ways to enhance the cross-departmental – and interdisciplinary – character of our academic organization and intellectual engagement.** Even as we work to build and enhance a number of interdisciplinary programs and activities, we will attempt to increase opportunities for coordination and collaboration between and among our various academic units.*

He has more than carried through his promise, and today can point to several new interdisciplinary programs on campus, and a significant amount of new fundraising associated with those programs.

Finally, no discussion of the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of academic work and academic life at Columbia is complete without mentioning its most visible manifestation: the Northwest Corner Building, which was called the Interdisciplinary Science Building at an early stage.

Provost Claude Mason Steele arrived at Columbia just one year ago from Stanford, where he often spoke of the need to “increase our hub-ness”, pushed to create and solidify links between traditional psychology, brain imaging, and neuroscience, and advocated restructuring entire psychology departments toward faculty members with collaborative resumes.<sup>3</sup>

Since his arrival, Provost Steele has visibly and vocally made science, specifically interdisciplinary science, an integral priority, and focused many of his considerable energies by thoughtfully examining, consulting, and ultimately leading decisions on the nature, scale, and scope of interdisciplinary links between the arts and sciences, engineering, and medical interests in the Northwest Corner Building. And for good reason: as the Northwest Corner Building is often spoken of as a “training run” for Manhattanville, the success of our future interdisciplinary endeavors, notably the Jerome L. Greene Mind, Brain, and Behavior Center, will depend on the lessons and practices we derive now.

Interdisciplinary teaching and research, in collaboration with the global community of universities and among Columbia’s faculty and students, has become and will remain at the forefront of Columbia’s priorities in this century. The work of its academic leadership amply reflects this commitment. Any efforts undertaken should enhance Columbia’s capability and competitiveness in this sphere.

## **Faculty Perspectives**

IN considering faculty perspectives on the importance of interdisciplinary interaction in our academic community and the positive impact that a Graduate Student Center could create, we sought prominent faculty members who are committed to graduate education and whose work and departments have been visibly advanced by interdisciplinary collaboration.

We note that all of the faculty members we contacted agreed immediately to provide statements of support for a Graduate Student Center, stressing the positive interaction among graduate students that it would foster, and the benefits it would provide to the entire graduate student community.

**These statements encourage us in the belief that the faculty broadly acknowledge the importance of interdisciplinary interaction in an academic community, and enthusiastically endorse a Graduate Student Center as a means to achieve such community.**

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<sup>3</sup> Comments from the Presidential Symposium of the Association for Psychological Science’s 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention. Held in Chicago, IL, May 22-25, 2008.

**Carlos J. Alonso, Morris and Alma Schapiro Professor in the Humanities, Chair of the Department of Latin American and Iberian Cultures, Member of the Executive Committee of GSAS, and (as of September 1, 2010) Interim Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.**

“Graduate programs nowadays should train their students in the discipline they represent as well as in the responsible ways of moving away from that very discipline. Departments and fields are at very different stages in their articulation of this inevitable displacement. Graduate schools and divisions should find ways to encourage this structural transformation by enabling spaces in which this type of thinking can be performed – in all the senses of that word: workshops, forums, lectures, symposia, etc. While a graduate center is not required for such an endeavor, it is also true that the existence of one would provide the institutional continuity and materiality that such a project would need to sustain itself.”

**Elizabeth S. Blackmar, Professor of History and Member of the Graduate Education Committee**

“Universities bring together scholars engaged in inquiry across all fields of human knowledge, and part of the intellectual life and inspiration of universities rests on the conversations among peers who respect one another’s work across disciplines. Faculty have long learned to value exchanges with colleagues in disparate disciplines; indeed, the opportunity to learn about work in other fields is one of the things that prompt many faculty to serve on university committees or to attend university lectures. Both individual departments and specific interdisciplinary programs in the sciences, humanities, and social sciences have provided spaces on campus for graduate students to meet and talk, but these programs serve a structured intellectual agenda.

Columbia’s graduate students need a space and opportunity to encounter students working in all disciplines; such encounters are both intellectually rewarding and also allow students to participate in the community building that stands at the heart of universities (and which forms the foundation for faculty governance). A Graduate Student Center provides both the social and intellectual benefits of a broadened outlook. Knowing how fellow students in other departments are negotiating the rigors of qualifying exams and dissertation writing; balancing the challenges of teaching, research, and in some instances parenting; or weathering the job market gives students perspective on their own work. Understanding creative work in fields other than one’s own is part of *higher* education. Faculty and undergraduates are used to the advantages that come from having a space on campus that accommodates both academic and social functions; graduate students, too, should have the benefits of space in which to meet informally and also organize their own programs.”

**Ronald C. Breslow, University Professor (affiliated with Chemistry)**

“Columbia needs a center for graduate students and postdoctoral students. In the sciences, there is cooperation among chemists, physicists, and biologists, and a center for social interaction would greatly increase this. The scientists would also see that they have much in common with people in other departments once they had a way to meet them. The graduate students and postdoctorals generally may well end up in academic positions where the early contacts they make at Columbia will last a lifetime. The proposed center could organize some social events where spouses and children could also meet their opposite numbers, making a community out of what is sometimes a lonely place. Graduate students, and even more so postdoctorals, feel like members of their departments or of their subgroups in the departments, not of Columbia. The center would make them all feel that they have a true place here, as part of a valued group of Columbia scholars.”

**Julio M. Fernández, Professor of Biological Sciences**

“Nature has no regard for scientific boundaries. Today's scientists are addressing questions and solving problems using knowledge from many different disciplines. Combining protein engineering and applied mathematics together with polymer physics is necessary for understanding the dynamics of the individual molecules that form all cellular pathways. Combining quantum physics together with organic synthesis and single molecule techniques is crucial for the design of a new generation of switches that will form the building blocks for new types of computers. Molecular engineering of optical probes combined together with graph theory and computer science techniques are necessary to fully describe the computational capabilities of neuronal circuits. These examples illustrate the modus operandi of science in the 21st century. Large scale integration of knowledge is enabled by the growing overlap between disciplines. It is essential that we train modern scientists from this much broader perspective. A Graduate Student Center in the Columbia community that would promote interaction in the growing overlaps between disciplines would be an important addition.”

**Pierre Force, Professor of French and History**

“A few years ago we rebuilt the Department of French according to an interdisciplinary model. Today, several members of the department hold joint appointments with other departments (History, Philosophy, Sociology). The same model is followed in the doctoral program and the dissertation topics reflect the interdisciplinary engagements of the faculty. However, it is not easy for students to sustain an interdisciplinary focus because there is no support structure other than the dissertation advising committee. A Graduate Student Center would certainly be helpful in that regard.”

**Walter M. Frisch, H. Howard Gumm and Harry & Albert von Tilzer Professor of Music and Director of Graduate Studies**

“Columbia is a community of scholars at many levels and in many ways. Interdisciplinary connections are essential to the intellectual health of this community, including its graduate students. Because of the university's size and complexity, interdisciplinary activities are difficult to coordinate. I strongly endorse – and as Director of Graduate Studies in Music am eager to help facilitate – any initiatives to improve interdisciplinary efforts among our graduate students, who are among the brightest and most accomplished in the academic world and would benefit enormously from this effort.”

**Jean E. Howard, George Delacorte Professor in the Humanities and Chair of the Department of English and Comparative Literature**

“It is important for Columbia to create an interdisciplinary Graduate Student Center. Graduate students learn as much from their peers as from their professors, and a comfortable, well-designed Graduate Student Center would facilitate interactions across disciplinary boundaries and provide a place where students from all departments could take part in the many mentoring and career development programs essential to their intellectual and professional growth.

This is perhaps particularly true in the last half of a graduate student career when the writing of a dissertation can become a lonely undertaking. A space to socialize and to talk about work is crucial during these years. It is also unfortunately true that many departments at Columbia do not have rooms or offices where graduate students can meet with the undergrads they teach. A Graduate Student Center could provide such a venue, helping to equalize the resources available to graduate student teachers. At the moment, the Graduate Faculties Lounge in 301 Philosophy Hall, while a beautiful space, is too small and too overbooked to fulfill the many needs of true Graduate Student Center. It's time to give high priority to a better solution.”

**Kenneth T. Jackson, Jacques Barzun Professor in History and the Social Sciences**

“I was pleased to learn recently of the possibility that the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences might be able to create a Graduate Student Center for the exclusive use of students in Master's or Ph.D. programs. I see this as important because of the interdisciplinary nature of the effort. Although research has in recent decades become less focused on a particular academic area, Columbia is still divided into departments. A Graduate Student Center would enable students from different parts of the university to interact socially and intellectually in a place that would help to break down boundaries. I congratulate you for your leadership in

this area, and hope that Dean Henry Pinkham will be able to muster the support he needs for such a vital addition to the campus.”

**Elaine P. Sisman, Anne Parsons Bender Professor of Music**

“Beyond specialized training in disciplines and teaching, graduate school should afford the opportunity to make connections with students in other disciplines, to develop dialogues and networks outside the classroom. These opportunities enable students to feel rooted in an institution, not merely a department. A center for graduate-student activities is thus not only a means of fostering social and intellectual community but also a critical incubator for the interdisciplinary dialogues they will need to become more effective scholars and colleagues in (and out of) their future academic careers.

Having just spent several years on Princeton's Graduate School Leadership Council (2005-2009), I can attest to the importance of dedicated spaces for graduate students. Princeton was even able to renovate the public spaces in its off-site Graduate College for these purposes. Cornell transformed a small existing building into a new graduate student center when the former headquarters of graduate student life, Sage Hall, was turned over to the business school. A Graduate Student Center at Columbia would improve the quality of life of graduate students in every way: it would reconstitute a sense of community associated with their undergraduate schools, promote dialogue among teachers of the Core Curriculum, and broaden the shared sense of scholarly discovery that they're learning to experience at Columbia.”

## **Student Perspectives**

THE Graduate Student Advisory Council provided key logistical and statistical support in this portion of the report. They conducted both a survey of their entire student body, and a study of comparable centers at other universities. **Based on their submissions, the Committee believes that student perspectives are aligned with administrative and faculty perspectives, and that there is strong demand for a Graduate Student Center. The Committee further believes that Columbia does not compare favorably to its peers by its lack of a Graduate Student Center.**

### **GSAC Survey Results and Anecdotal Perspectives**

THE GSAC's biennial Quality of Life Survey at Columbia University was conducted during Spring 2009. The survey represents a statistically significant 32% of the overall population of

students in GSAS.<sup>4</sup> The survey asked questions on a variety of issues relating to the quality of life of graduate students in different disciplines.

Today's graduate students are exploring topics that are increasingly interdisciplinary and require interaction with scholars from various fields of study. The 2009 Quality of Life survey shows that GSAS students would greatly benefit from dedicated space for interdisciplinary interaction and building community.

We have extracted relevant portions of the survey, centering on study and work space, perceptions of community among students, and finally demand for a Graduate Student Center.

### *Study and Work Space*

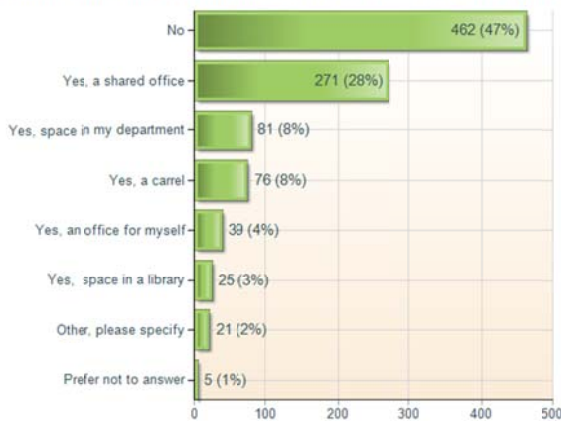
Key findings:

- 62% of respondents rated the availability of study space on the CU campuses as **average to very poor**.
- 47% of respondents have **no dedicated study or work space on campus**.
- 41% of graduate students **work at home or outside Columbia University facilities**. Only 20% of respondents regularly work in a Columbia library. These percentages show that the lack of available space creates an **isolated environment for a majority of graduate students** who are working and studying on their own outside Columbia facilities.
- When asked if they believe there is enough space for graduate students on campus to meet or hold events, **63% of respondents said no**. Only 27% thought graduate student space was adequate.

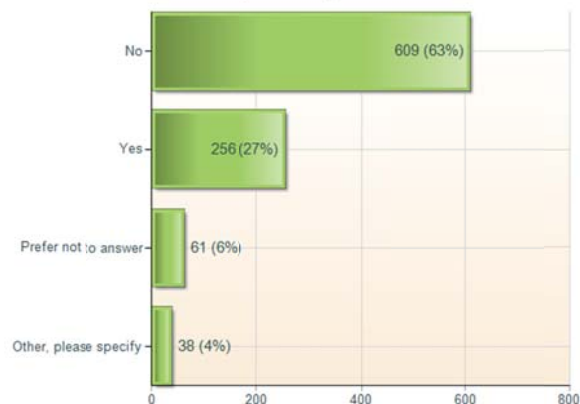
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<sup>4</sup> There were 980 responses out of an enrolled population of 3,088 students in GSAS. This is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level with confidence interval (also commonly known as a “margin of error”) of +/- 2.6%. A margin of error of +/- 2.6% does not change the conclusions of any of the statistics presented in this report.

**Libraries and Space Do you have any dedicated study space on campus?**



**Libraries and Space Do you think that there is enough space for graduate students on campus to hang out or hold events?**

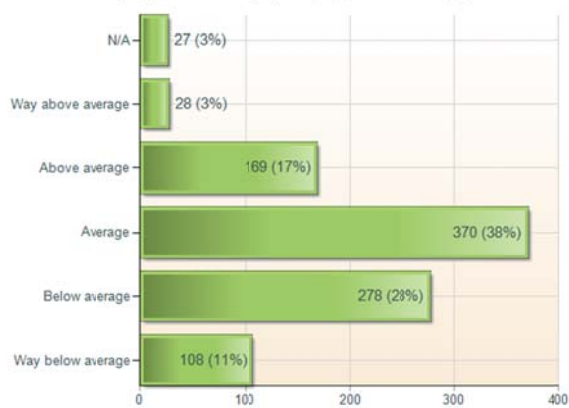


*Graduate Student Community*

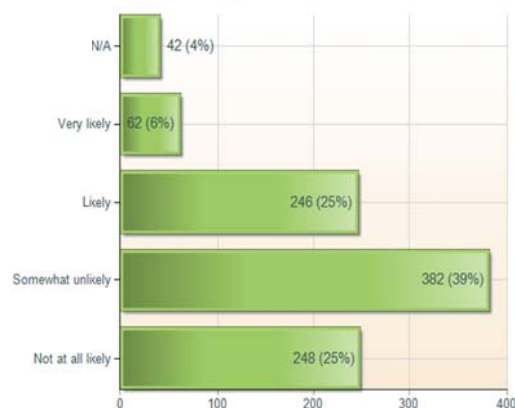
Key findings:

- 77% of respondents feel that the graduate student community is **not very close-knit**. Respondents thus also recognized the absence of a GSAS student community.
- 64% of respondents said they are **unlikely to continue to invest** in Columbia after graduation. We believe, based on anecdotal evidence, that alumni engagement in the lives of Columbia’s graduate schools is closely related to a sense of academic community and ownership during their time as students, in addition to the rigor of their education.

**How close-knit do you feel the graduate student community is on a scale of 1 (way below average) to 5 (way above average)?**



**How likely are you to give monetary contributions to Columbia once you graduate?**

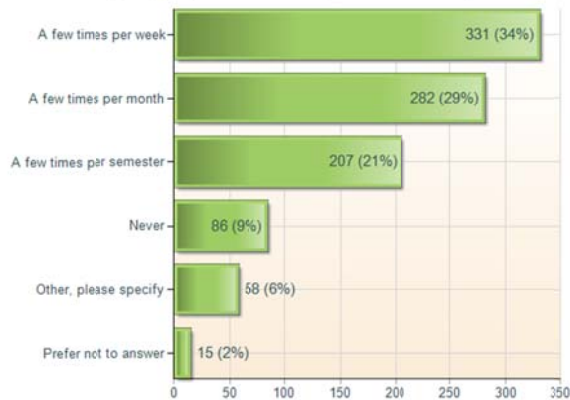


*Student Demand for a GSC*

Key findings:

- 84% of respondents said they **would use a Graduate Student Center regularly**.

**Libraries and Space** If a graduate student lounge existed where students could work, hang out, or have events, how often would you use it?



### *Prospective Perspective*

THE Committee has always suspected that the absence of a Graduate Student Center may render Columbia University’s graduate programs less appealing than its peers.

A close friend and classmate of one of the Committee members who is a *magna cum laude* graduate of Columbia College and a graduate student elsewhere in the Ivy League freely volunteered the following anecdotal perspective when the Graduate Student Center proposal was brought up in casual conversation. His identity is redacted for reasons of process integrity and conflict of interest as he is currently an applicant to the GSAS Ph.D. program.

*I am an alumnus of Columbia College who is looking into PhD programs across the country. If I did not have any previous knowledge of the spatial dynamics of Columbia, I would assume that I would be better served by the facilities at other universities which simply have more space or which have more conspicuously invested in the quality of life of their graduate student population.*

*For example, I am very familiar with the facilities and support offered by the graduate schools at Harvard and Yale. If the choice came down to a question of resources, only my previous institutional loyalty might lead me to prefer Columbia. The creation and promotion of a designated interdisciplinary space for graduate students would help bring Columbia up to par with these institutions with respect to its fostering of graduate student life, and help attract a broader range of applicants to the university.*

## Study of Comparable Centers at Peer Institutions

AMERICAN universities are seeking to improve the level of interdisciplinary interaction and the overall quality of education and life for graduate students, often with extensive programmatic offerings through a central graduate student center.

All of our peer institutions prioritize and dedicate space on campus to graduate student activities; many also provide a paid staff to organize and coordinate events of interest to graduate students. GSAC is currently the only campus organization dedicated to supporting GSAS student events. Unfortunately, GSAC is unable, on its own, to match the level of support and assistance to graduate students that our peers provide.

In its preparatory work, GSAC has corresponded extensively with counterpart organizations at peer institutions to find details of their graduate student centers, their facilities, and their programs. A brief survey is presented below.

*Cornell University's Big Red Barn*



**Staffing:** Full-time staff, headed by a director.

**Population served:** Graduate and professional students (approximately 5,100 total)

**Facilities and programs:** Provides spaces for meetings, receptions, etc. Equipped with a high-quality audio system for events, as well as a grand piano. Offers a popular lunch service every weekday. Other amenities include Internet terminals and mailboxes for students. Runs events every Thursday and Friday afternoon, alternate Wednesday and Thursday evenings, and first Fridays.

**Hours:** M-F 8 AM-10 PM. Lunch until 2 PM.

**Website:** <http://studentlife.gradschool.cornell.edu/index.php/big-red-barn>

**Summary:**

Space	Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lounge/large meeting space with tables, chairs</li> <li>• Small offices for student organizations, graduate student center staff</li> <li>• Conference rooms available for reservation</li> <li>• Multimedia equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• End of year barbecue</li> <li>• Latin salsa night</li> <li>• Philosophy book chats</li> <li>• TA Grading Break</li> <li>• Language chats</li> <li>• Art exhibits</li> <li>• TGIF Grad Pizza Nights</li> </ul>

*Princeton University's Graduate College*



**Staffing:** Full-time director, and nine part-time students.

**Population served:** Graduate and professional students (approximately 1,750 total), of whom 430 are residents at the College.

**Facilities and programs:** A dining hall for all graduate students, a museum, computer facilities, laundry facilities. Social spaces include the D-Bar, coffee house, the Dark Gallery, the van Dyke Library, social lounges, three TV rooms, two commons rooms. Recreational facilities include basketball and volleyball courts, music room, swimming pool, pool room, and fitness facilities.

The monthly High Table is a venerated tradition at the College where graduate students and faculty dine together.

**Hours:** Residential, so 24 hours.

**Website:** <https://weblamp.princeton.edu/gchouse/>

*Stanford University's Graduate Community Center*



In the early 2000s, a group of to GSC members worked with the Graduate Life Office to develop program guidelines for a future Graduate Community Center. At the time, the project was not funded, but a plan was put in place for a building if funding were to become available. Concerted lobbying efforts by GSC leaders persuaded the University to make the project a priority. In April 2003, alumnus John Arrillaga offered a substantial donation for the project, and the building's groundbreaking was held in January 2004.

**Staffing:** Full-time staff, headed by a director.

**Population served:** Graduate students (approximately 8,400 total)

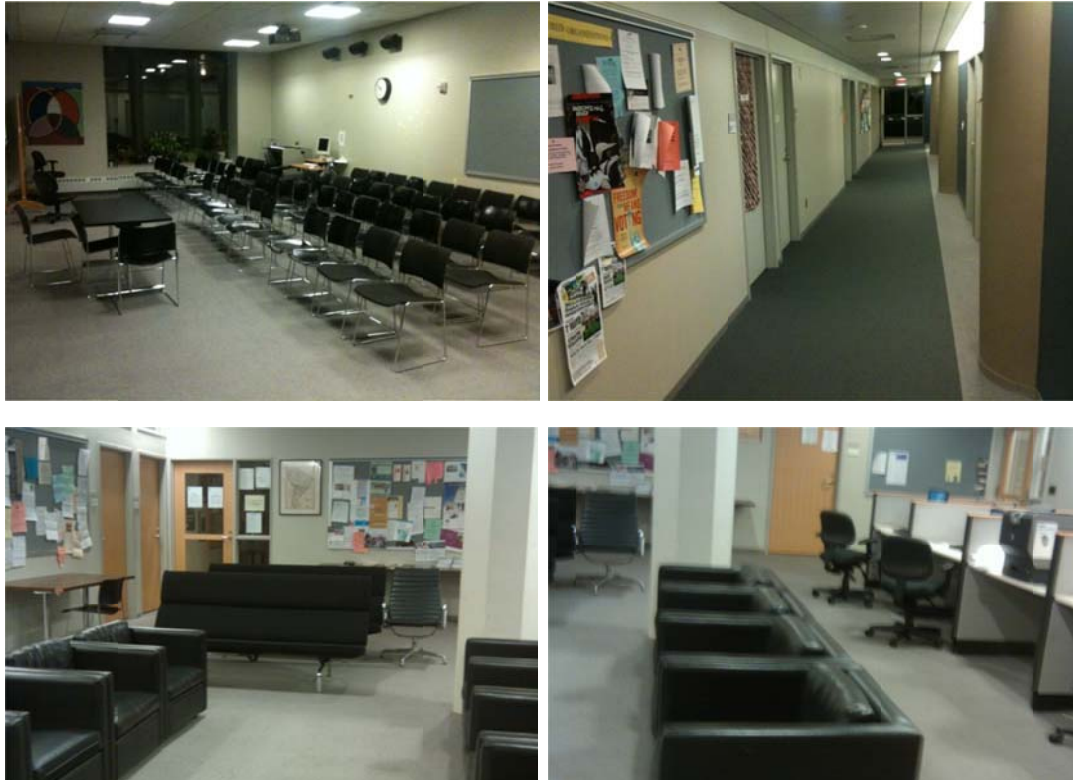
**Facilities and programs:** “Havana Room” large common room and event space (max occupancy 286). Graduate lounge with sofas, chairs, game/study tables, and a television. (The lounge cannot be reserved, but is a drop-in lounge where students can study, watch television, or just relax with friends). “Bogota Room” meeting space with conference tables and chairs (max occupancy 25). “Nairobi Room” meeting space with conference tables and chairs (max occupancy 45). “Sydney Children’s Room” play room, which can be converted to a meeting space. Community kitchen and outdoor patio with catering facilities.

**Size:** 12,000 square feet in a standalone two-story building.

**Website:** <http://www.stanford.edu/group/glo/gcc/index.html>

Space	Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large meeting room</li> <li>• Smaller meeting and conference rooms</li> <li>• Kids’ playroom with games and toys</li> <li>• Community kitchen</li> <li>• Outdoor patio</li> <li>• Smaller lounge with multimedia</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grad formal</li> <li>• Thanksgiving dinner</li> <li>• Trivia nights</li> <li>• Beach trip</li> <li>• Easter egg roll</li> </ul>

*City University of New York's Robert Gilleece Center*



The Robert Gilleece Center refers to the fifth floor of the CUNY Graduate Center (both the formal name of the doctorate-granting institution of CUNY and the building which houses the institution), which is administered by the CUNY Doctoral Students' Council (representing all doctoral and masters' students across the CUNY system). Aside from the Gilleece Center itself, the CUNY Graduate Center contains a student/faculty dining commons, a coffee shop, and a general multi-purpose lounge.

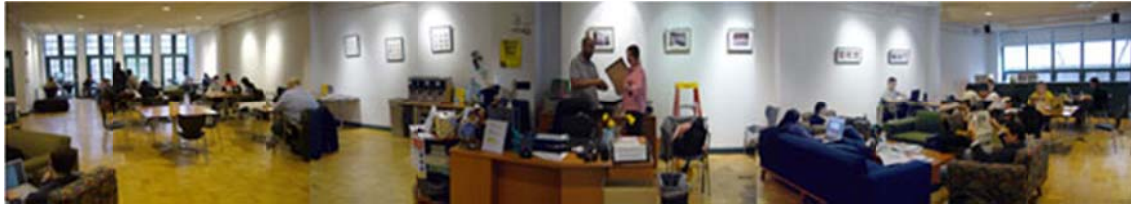
**Population served:** Graduate students (approximately 4,500 total).

**Facilities and programs:** Two student lounges (19' x 42' each), connected by a small pantry, which are available by reservation for student-organized events, such as conferences, meetings, cultural events, and fitness classes (for a typical schedule, see March 2010 at <http://cunydisc.org/calendar/roomreservations/2010-03>), one conference room (15' x 23'), offices for Council officers and administration, one student newspaper double office (25' x 10'), and several offices for chartered student organizations (often shared).

**Size:** 3,843 square feet.

**Website:** <http://cunydisc.org/>

*University of Pennsylvania's Graduate Student Center*



The University of Pennsylvania's Graduate Student Center came into being in 2001 after the university accepted a proposal made by the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GAPSA) and the Graduate Student Association Council (GSAC).

**Staffing:** Three full-time staff members (a director, an assistant director, and an administrative assistant), three part-time staff, also one dozen Graduate Fellows who create and coordinate programs at the Center, staff the café and information desk.

**Population served:** Graduate and professional students (approximately 3,500 total).

**Facilities and programs:** Offers services, programs, and information resources as well as an informal place to relax. The center provides free coffee and tea throughout the day to students, has a large lounge, rooms to hold meetings, study groups, and student events. The Center also programs events specifically for graduate students, such as lectures by notable faculty, foreign language classes, recreational outings, and cultural trips. The Center distributes regular emails to students of its events.

**Hours:** M-Thurs 9 AM-10 PM, Friday 9 AM-6 PM, Saturday/Sunday Noon-9 PM.

**Size:** 8,000 square feet on three levels.

Space	Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large common meeting room with free coffee and tea</li> <li>• Computer/printing lab</li> <li>• Multimedia equipment</li> <li>• Outside courtyard</li> <li>• Kitchen</li> <li>• Copy room</li> <li>• Small offices for directors and graduate student fellows</li> <li>• 3 Conference rooms</li> <li>• Group study rooms for 4-8 people</li> <li>• Small lounge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional development workshops</li> <li>• Social events such as graduation breakfast, orientation events, TA appreciation, ski trip, museum tours, local concerts</li> <li>• Graduate-undergraduate mentoring program</li> <li>• Public service events in the West Philadelphia community</li> <li>• Language chats</li> <li>• Book swap</li> <li>• Grad Center Alumni Weekend</li> </ul>

*Yale University's McDougal Center*



**Staffing:** Three full-time staff (a director, an administrative assistant, and a professional development consultant), about a dozen Graduate Fellows who create and coordinate programs at the center, a small career services office (three full-time staff), and an office of teaching preparation and development (one full-time staff member).

**Population served:** Graduate and professional students (approximately 2,300 total), postdoctoral fellows, faculty, and staff.

**Facilities and programs:** Offers services, programs, and information resources as well as an informal place to relax. Has a career center and a teaching training center. Has a resource library for fellowships, careers, and teaching. Has a student-run café (the Blue Dog Café). Lockers available. Hosts happy hours in its Common Room. Shows movies every Friday and Saturday night. Offers intellectual and cultural events, and sponsors outings like picnics. Sponsors events for graduate women, students of color, and international students. Graduate student organizations are welcome to use its rooms.

**Hours:** M-F 9 AM-11 PM, Saturday/Sunday 11 AM-11 PM. Career services office open M-F 9 AM-5 PM.

**Website:** <http://www.yale.edu/graduateschool/mcdougal/>

**Summary:**

Space	Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large meeting space with seating for 100 people</li> <li>• Audiovisual equipment</li> <li>• Game room: board games, game tables</li> <li>• Music practice room with piano</li> <li>• Conference and meeting rooms</li> <li>• Computer/printing lab</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First Friday at Five Happy Hours</li> <li>• Grad Night arts events</li> <li>• International Programs</li> <li>• Winter Ball</li> <li>• Chocolate Fest</li> <li>• Graduate Writing Center</li> <li>• Dissertation boot camps</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Family playroom and resource room</li><li>• Lockers</li><li>• Blue Dog Café</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Peer-review groups</li><li>• Graduate career service workshops</li><li>• Graduate Teaching Center events</li></ul>
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*New York University's Graduate Student Commons*



**Facilities and programs:** The Graduate Student Commons, located in the Silver Center for Arts and Sciences, is for the exclusive use of GSAS students. It is a place for study and quiet conversation. The Commons provides a setting for interdisciplinary discussion and exchange.

**Hours:** 24 hours

<b>Space</b>	<b>Events</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large common room</li> <li>• Conference rooms</li> <li>• Individual office spaces</li> <li>• Student lockers</li> <li>• Computer lab</li> <li>• Family Care Center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic workshops</li> <li>• Monthly graduate socials</li> <li>• Breakfast for dinner</li> <li>• Graduate first-year success series</li> <li>• Graduate week</li> <li>• Graduate welcome week orientation</li> <li>• Students with children club</li> </ul>

*Harvard University's Dudley House*



**Staffing:** One house master, one co-master, one house administrator, and two assistants. Approximately 25 graduate student Dudley Fellows responsible for programming. Also, approximately 5 graduate Dudley Tutors responsible for various aspects of the undergraduate community.

**Population served:** Harvard GSAS students and faculty (approximately 3,200 total)

**Facilities and programs:** Houses administrative and business offices, including Associate Dean for Student Affairs, and Graduate Student Council offices, computer/printing facilities, meeting spaces for student organizations and activities, student lounge, and library. Has a main dining room (GSAS dorm students take meals here through a meal plan), a smaller dining room for private functions, 2 large function rooms, one small meeting room, and offices for various administrators and Dudley Fellows. Hosts student-faculty lunches, discussion groups, language tables at lunch and dinner, dinner speakers, art exhibits, a concert series, ski trips, and other outings. Has intramural athletic teams, musical groups, a literary magazine, and public service organizations. Also sponsors 30 student organizations. Has a student-run café (Café Gato Rojo), a movie series, game room, lockers, and bulletin boards.

**Hours:** House: M-F 9 AM-11 PM, Saturday Noon-8 PM, Sunday Noon-11 PM

Library and Computing Facilities: M-Thurs 9 AM-11 PM, Friday 9 AM-8 PM, Saturday Noon-8 PM, Sunday Noon-11 PM

House Office Hours: M-F 9 AM-5 PM

**Website:** <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~dudley/>

**Summary:**

Space	Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large meeting room</li> <li>• Dudley Cafe</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dudley Orchestra, Chorus and Jazz Band concerts</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cafe Gato Rojo</li><li>• Conference/meeting rooms</li><li>• Library</li><li>• Game room</li><li>• Computer lab</li><li>• Teaching Assistant Room</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Classic Film Fest</li><li>• Literature Nights</li><li>• Art exhibitions</li><li>• Writing boot camp</li><li>• Book Club</li><li>• Knitting Club</li><li>• Wine tasting</li><li>• Dudley Fest</li><li>• GSAS Cookout</li><li>• Outings</li><li>• Public service events</li><li>• Language tables</li><li>• Dudley sports teams</li><li>• One Night In... Dinners to learn about other cultures and geographic regions</li><li>• Senior Dinners: Graduate students dine and mingle with noted members of the Boston community</li></ul>
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## Review of a Proposed Graduate Student Center

### Review of Existing Space and Facilities (Morningside)

Two kinds of space are currently available to graduate students. First, some departments have their own internal departmental lounges and reading rooms. Second, there is the Graduate Faculties Lounge (GFL) in 301 Philosophy.

#### *Departmental Lounges and Reading Rooms*

The Committee conducted an extensive walk-through survey of the Morningside Campus, visiting each department in turn. We have identified numerous distinct spaces available for the use of graduate students within departments:

1. Graduate Student Lounge of the Department of Music (Dodge 606)
2. Graduate Student Office of the Department of Classics (Hamilton 618)
3. Porter Library of the Department of Classics (Hamilton 617)
4. Reading Room of the Department of Slavic Languages (Hamilton 713)
5. Graduate Student Lounge of the Department of Germanic Languages (Hamilton 310)
6. Lounge of the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures (Kent 403)
7. Graduate Student Lounge of the Department of Philosophy (Philosophy 714)
8. Graduate Student Lounge of the Department of French (Philosophy 519)
9. Lounge of the Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies (Knox 401B)
10. Reading Room of the Department of MESAAS (Knox 401C)
11. Mailroom/Lounge of the Department of Sociology (Knox 501D)
12. Lounge of the Department of Religion (80 Claremont, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor)
13. Lounge/Cafeteria of GSAPP (Avery Basement)
14. Work Room of the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences (Schermerhorn 553)
15. Lounge of DEES (Schermerhorn 552)
16. Graduate Student Office of DEES (Schermerhorn 551)
17. Graduate Student Office of the Department of Anthropology (Schermerhorn Extension 470)
18. Murphy-Fried Lounge of the Department of Anthropology (Schermerhorn Extension 465)
19. Sheldon Schep Library of the Department of Anthropology (Schermerhorn Extension 457)
20. Graduate Student Office of the Department of Ecology, Evolution and Environmental Biology (Schermerhorn Extension 1020)

21. Graduate Student Office of the Department of History (Fayerweather 611-613)
22. Graduate Student Lounge of the Department of History (Fayerweather 611-613)
23. Ph.D. Office of the Department of Statistics (Social Work 1023)
24. Tutoring Room of the Department of Statistics (Social Work 901)
25. M.A. Lounge of the Department of Statistics (Social Work 902)
26. Ph.D. Office of the Department of Economics (IAB 1036)
27. TA Office of the Department of Economics (IAB 1006A)
28. Rogers Common Room of the Department of Political Science (IAB 707)
29. Graduate Student Workspaces of the Department of Political Science (IAB 7)
30. Percy Uris Graduate Student Lounge of the Department of Biological Sciences (Fairchild 900)
31. Graduate Student Office of the Department of Astronomy and Astrophysics (Pupin 1333)
32. Numerous graduate student offices of the Department of Physics (Pupin 7 and 9)
33. Numerous lounges and common areas attached to individual labs of the Department of Chemistry (Havemeyer, Havemeyer Extension, and Chandler Labs)
34. Lounge of the Department of Chemistry (Havemeyer 7)
35. Group Meeting Rooms of the Department of Chemistry (Havemeyer 7)
36. Numerous lounges and common areas attached to individual labs of the Department of Psychology (Schermerhorn)
37. 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>-Year Ph.D. Offices of the Department of Mathematics (Math 206A/B)
38. Upper-Level Ph.D. Offices of the Department of Mathematics (Math 408)

The Committee visited each. Pictures of each may be found in Exhibit 1. In summary, the Committee found:

- Departmental lounges and reading rooms vary sharply in availability and quality. The Department of Anthropology, for example, contains a departmental library, a Graduate Student Office, and a Graduate Student Lounge. The Department of Italian (among others), on the other hand, has no space at all.
- Some departmental lounge sizes are often completely out of proportion with the population they are intended to serve. Thirty graduate students enjoy the use of two spaces with the Department of Classics. One hundred graduate students and postdoctoral fellows in the Department of Music have the use of one lounge, smaller than either of the two spaces in Classics.
- Three departments – Astronomy and Astrophysics, Physics, and Mathematics – are able to provide a dedicated work space for every Ph.D. student.
- Some departmental lounges are simply unavailable for the use of students and are opened only for events. A notable example is the lounge of the Department of East

Asian Languages and Cultures, which contains rare and valuable George Nakashima furniture.

These are physical complaints, which derive from Columbia's location in a dense metropolis and perennial lack of space, about which little, if anything, can be done.

The Committee did take note of one particularly well-executed graduate student space, the Judith Lee Stronach Center of the Department of Art History and Archaeology, located in 820 Schermerhorn Hall. The Stronach Center, opened in the past academic year, is a large, well-lit, open space that contains many of the elements sought in a Graduate Student Center, including small rooms for group study and office hours, large open spaces for events and informal interaction, and a computer facility.

The Stronach Center was designed by Columbia faculty and funded by a bequest from the estate of a donor. It is a model for how a Graduate Student Center would work for GSAS as a whole. Please see Exhibit 3: Pictures of the Judith Lee Stronach Center and Exhibit 4: Rendering and Description of the Judith Lee Stronach Center.

The Committee, throughout this survey, notes two additional concerns which we believe to be especially significant beyond the physical aspects of departmental spaces:

- Departmental lounges – by sheer virtue of being *departmental* lounges – did not fulfill a stated desire among the students of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences to build community and promote cross-discipline and cross-departmental interaction among students. While it is important that graduate students within a field of study contribute to the life of their departments, it is equally important as part of a comprehensive educational experience to discourage “departmental myopia” and promote interaction across the disciplines.
- Departmental lounges are *lounges* as opposed to student *centers*, that is, physical space set aside with little, if any, programming priorities outside of departmental concerns.

Departmental lounges fulfill a valuable purpose within the lives of departments, and this report in no way criticizes or advocates changes to the way they have been run. **However, the Committee believes that departmental lounges and reading rooms do not, and cannot, successfully promote interdisciplinary interaction within the academic community of GSAS as a whole.**

*Graduate Faculties Lounge (301 Philosophy)*

The Committee investigated the conditions and uses of the GFL located in 301 Philosophy. In this matter, we consulted extensively with representatives of GSAC.

Currently, the GFL is the only space available for GSAS events hosted by GSAS administration and the Center for Teaching and Learning. In addition, it is the only space that GSAC and other groups recognized or sponsored by GSAC may reserve without charge.

Since the GFL is not dedicated to graduate students, the room is often reserved by many other entities on campus. In theory, the GFL is open Monday–Friday, 10 AM–6 PM. However, when the room is reserved for an event or its administrator, Craig Knobles, is unavailable, the room is closed. As it is a faculty lounge, GSAS administrators, departments, and faculty also have first preference to reserve the room before student organizations.

The space constraints and limitations of the GFL may be illustrated by examining the room's schedule during the semester. To illustrate the typical availability of the GFL, we present its reservation schedule for April 2010 in Exhibit 5.

Our analysis shows that in the month of 2010, out of the 21 weekdays, the lounge was not available:

- 38% of the mornings
- 71% of the afternoons
- 57% of the evenings

Since most graduate students need to fulfill their research obligations during the day, the lack of availability in the afternoon and evening greatly undermines any graduate student group's effort to organize events at the GFL.

Aside from the lounge's lack of availability, its configuration and the lack of diversity in its functions present additional obstacles for graduate students:

- The acoustics and unavailability discourage pedagogical interactions such as TA office hours.
- The acoustics also discourage oral communication. GSAC has been holding monthly meetings in the GFL with representatives from all departments, and has heard frequent complaints about the acoustics.
- The room also limits communication because it lacks multimedia facilities for presentation of PowerPoint or video and audio materials. Groups must provide or pay for any multimedia equipment they want to use.
- The large floor area with no segmentation is poorly suited to smaller group events.

- The acoustics are inadequate for live music performance. This is significant because 40% of the GFL's reservations are for music events.

Pictures of the GFL may be found in Exhibit 5.

The Committee would additionally like to note that GSAC not only holds many social events throughout the academic semesters to bring students from different departments together, but also sponsors student groups with particular interests, especially those of an academic nature, by providing financial support and activity space. In this respect, it is fulfilling its mandate to provide programming activities according to the desires of GSAS students.

A great many of GSAC's sponsored groups, such as the Columbia Biotechnology Club, the Jewish Studies Graduate Student Association, the Organization for the Advancement of Studies of Inner Eurasian Societies, and Women in Science at Columbia University, are fully interdisciplinary in nature, and have built bridges between students with different academic backgrounds.

Such experiences are vitally important to graduate student morale, as to encourage them to not only be proud of being part of a prestigious academic program, but also proud of being part of Columbia University; this interdisciplinary, dynamic, and intellectually stimulating environment completes one's education. However, the only space that GSAC can offer these groups is the GFL, a room that is often already booked, and often an unsuitable choice for many of the envisioned events. In short, the Graduate Faculty Lounge cannot be a *student center* precisely because it is a *faculty lounge*.

The GFL is and continues to be a space wholly appropriate for large group events, receptions, and the like. A Graduate Student Center would not supplant the GFL, but rather complement it, as well as clear a significant amount of the conflict between student and administrative priorities in use of the GFL. The GFL would continue to be used primarily for the purposes it is best suited – large-scale events, receptions, and performances – rather than have its already busy schedule burdened with functions for which it is not.

**Based on its assessment of the facts and factors related to the use of the Graduate Faculty Lounge, the Committee believes that the GFL, by virtue of its configuration, conditions, and demands, does not, and cannot, promote either interdisciplinary interaction or the building of an academic community among the students of GSAS.**

### **Review of Existing Space and Facilities (Medical)**

To the extent possible, the Committee also investigated spaces available to graduate students at the Columbia University Medical Center. Although the Medical Center is often

thought of solely as the academic home of students studying for medical degrees, in reality, all of the non-first-professional degrees, e.g. M.D., D.D.S., et. al., are granted through GSAS. In addition, a significant number of students in departments formally based on the Morningside campus, e.g. Biological Sciences, Chemistry, Pyschology, et. al., nevertheless conduct research and spend the majority of their time at the Medical Center. Thus, CUMC is home to over two thousand students of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, served by the Faculty of Medicine, the Faculty of the Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science, and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

The Committee found six spaces somewhat accessible to the students of GSAS. Pictures may be found in Exhibit 2: Pictures of Departmental Lounges and Other Spaces (Medical).

The Committee summarizes its observations as follows:

- Bard Hall's Main Lounge is an area used by the GSAS students for social purposes. It suffers from many of the same flaws as the GFL in terms of being non-divisible and with faulty acoustics. It is also part of the dormitory in Bard Hall, and therefore is primarily used by its residents.
- Bard Hall's Recovery Room is a cafeteria/study space that serves residents of Bard Hall dormitory.
- The Irving Cancer Research Center's (ICRC) Commissary Room is a spartan facility with a vending machine and some tables and chairs intended for faculty and staff. Only graduate students with some collaboration with faculty associated with ICRC may access this facility.
- The ICRC also contains a number of small conference rooms. However, graduate students may only use it without reservation between 12 PM-1 PM.
- The Pathology Department Library on the 15th floor of the Presbyterian Hospital the Pharmacology Library on the 7th floor of Black Building can be accessed by students in the Department of Pathology and Department of Pharmacology, respectively. However, these libraries also serve as departmental conference rooms and are often reserved for events.
- The Hammer Health Sciences Library's recent renovations included new, open study spaces as well as smaller rooms that are ideal for group study and individual teaching. This well executed space has greatly improved the interaction between students form different medical disciplines. However, students from the Morningside Campus find it difficult to use on a regular basis due to its location.

The Associate Dean's office at Health Sciences Office has surveyed graduate students at CUMC about their need for space and reported the following findings:

- GSAS students need more social space with publicly accessible kitchen, dedicated refrigerator and storage space.
- The Graduate Student Organization at Columbia University Medical Center, an organization that host most social events at the health sciences campus for GSAS students, will benefit from an office/meeting space.
- Recreational space with pool tables, ping pong tables, and yoga and wellness classrooms that will bring together students from different medical disciplines through recreational activities.
- Students who live off-campus or at the Morningside Campus would benefit from after-hour lounge space with lockers when they stay at medical campus for experiments until late night.

A new building is being planned to replace 106 Haven Avenue, which is currently a resident building at the Medical Center. A Ph.D. student lounge and additional classroom space are said to be incorporated in the new building. While these improvements are underway, GSAS students at the Medical Center will greatly benefit from an interim Graduate Student Center for several reasons:

- The construction plan is not yet available, meaning it will take years before the completion of the building. At the meantime, an interim Graduate Student Center could serve the students at the Medical Center.
- While the currently available and proposed space will greatly enhance the interdisciplinary interaction between graduate students and health care professional students at the Medical Center, it is even more critical to promote interactions between students from the Medical Center and the Morningside campus. Since most large scale social and academic events organized by GSAC take place in the Morningside campus, an interim Graduate Student Center in the Morningside campus will most likely help to achieve this goal.
- While the Medical Center is the home to two thousand GSAS students, the majority of GSAS students spend most of their time at the Morningside campus. These facilities at the Medical Center cannot satisfy the students from the main campus due to their locations.

**Based on these observations, the Committee believes that the spaces at the Columbia University Medical Center are also insufficient for fostering interdisciplinary interaction in an academic environment, and the interaction between graduate students based at the Columbia University Medical Center and graduate students from Morningside campus will be greatly improved by a Graduate Student Center.**

## Impact on the Academic Mission of the University

THE Committee examined the impact an interim Graduate Student Center would have on the academic mission of the University by ascertaining what contexts are most appropriate for and conducive to interdisciplinary interaction.

The clear subtext of recent developments towards an interdisciplinary model is *community*. It is to promote an interdisciplinary academic *community* that the Northwest Corner Building purposely places faculty from fields with little current collaboration but high collaborative potential in labs next door to each other. It is to maintain the closeness of our local academic *community* that we have chosen to pursue expansion in Manhattanville, rather than in locations in midtown or even outside the city. It is to promote the presence of Columbia University in the global academic *community* that we have launched our Columbia Global Centers worldwide.

Communities can form and thrive in many contexts, as enumerated above. However, for the students of GSAS, no such community *in any form* presently exists. Representatives of GSAC informed the Committee that this was primarily due to lack of a physical space which is both dedicated for the use of Master's and Ph.D. students *and* appropriate for the wide range of activities in the lives of GSAS students as both students and future academics. GSAS is the only graduate school at Columbia without such spaces.

The Graduate Student Center would, in addition to providing a home for Ph.D.s and Masters' students, also offer a place for postdoctoral fellows. Postdocs are an often overlooked and indeed orphaned group within the graduate community that is in dire need of a space in which to meet and both benefit from and bring the benefit of their experience to other members of their community. Bringing postdocs and students together is crucial for fostering cutting-edge, progressive research. The Graduate Student Center would provide the platform for young researchers to thrive and make meaningful encounters

Students we spoke to expressed a keen desire to meet students from other departments in formal, less-than-formal, and informal contexts, often in ways that cannot be organized or facilitated by their departments. Their reasons ranged from an earnest desire to find new insights in other fields, to sheer curiosity about what kept their classmates up at night, to balancing both their intellectual and social well-being during their time as students, to networking for future collaborative efforts.

GSAC has envisioned for years a bi-annual event, similar to the Princeton Graduate School Leadership Council, where graduate students from all fields contribute on an interdisciplinary topic. The Graduate Student Center could provide the place to carry out this event, but also

continue to serve as a platform for ongoing conversation and debates during and after these interdisciplinary talks. This way, the Graduate Student Center would become not only a place to build a graduate community in the narrower sense but a research community of the next generation of researchers and scholars that would have a truly interdisciplinary and cosmopolitan outlook.

One senior faculty member spoke movingly of his own experience as a graduate student elsewhere, where he found the long trek to a Ph.D. lonely and intense. The graduate community he was a part of provided support and a sense of camaraderie, but also formed the basis of many friendships and professional collaborations that have thrived to the present day. He counted that community of scholars, in addition to his own scholarship, as the highlight of his graduate studies.

Although the Committee was disappointed to learn of Dean Henry Pinkham's recent decision to step down, we were delighted to that Professor Carlos Alonso was named Interim Dean. Professor Alonso is not only supportive of a Graduate Student Center, but also contributed a statement of support to this report. We believe this, more than anything else, indicates that a Graduate Student Center is not merely Henry Pinkham's priority, but a GSAS priority, and a Columbia priority.

Columbia's institutional priorities are clear. We have come a long way in the past decade toward an interdisciplinary model of academic teaching, research, and scholarship. Interdisciplinary interactions are most fruitful within an academic community that spans departments and schools. A Graduate Student Center can provide both the physical space and programming capacity to foster that community, which does not currently exist for students of the GSAS.

**To promote interdisciplinary interaction in an academic community, the Committee believes an interim Graduate Student Center is not only fully aligned with, but would measurably advance, the academic and institutional mission of Columbia University in the City of New York.**

### **Interim Nature of Proposal**

THE Committee wishes to stress the "interim" nature of the Graduate Student Center being proposed. The Committee is well aware that Uris Hall will in all likelihood go to the arts and sciences once Columbia Business School decamps for Manhattanville in 2017. Within Uris, there will certainly be an emphasis on creating space for graduate students, and there are many attractive options within.

Uris Hall will not become available for seven years, but seven years is the lifespan of a Ph.D. The Committee is further sensitive to the impact in academic community created in the last two years by the move of departments to space near UTS. There is a sense of an urgent need to rebuild some of the community that once existed, but has since been dispersed by departmental moves, before these rifts become permanent. This is in addition to the already enumerated need to build interdisciplinary community within the graduate student body. Thus, the Committee believes a pressing need exists *now* for an interim space for a Graduate Student Center.

The Committee is also aware of the competing proposals for repurposing available space by the individual departments. It is not within the Committee's mandate to mediate or decide on the best use of available space, but we do offer the observation that a temporary use of space for the next seven years would not deprive anyone of any long-term allocation of space.

### **Space Requirements and Possible Configuration of a GSC**

It is not strictly within the mandate of the Committee to examine operational questions such as specific space needs within a Graduate Student Center or programming priorities. Nonetheless, on the basis of an exhaustively researched and comprehensive proposal already done by GSAC, the Committee provides – for illustrative purposes only – two possible configurations.

#### **Configuration A**

- **Large main space (1,000 square feet)**
  - Purposes: Individual and group study, holding of office hours, grading, meeting with groups and students
  - Facilities: Six computer and two printing stations, tables, chairs
- **Three conference rooms (250 square feet each)**
  - Purposes: Workshops, meetings, dissertation boot camps, professional development events
  - Facilities: Conference table, chairs, whiteboards, projector
- **Six group meeting rooms (100 square feet each)**
  - Purposes: TA meetings, group study, and smaller events
  - Facilities: Conference table, chairs, whiteboards, LCD with laptop hookup
  - Modeled after the group study rooms in Watson Library of Uris Hall<sup>5</sup>
- **Kitchen (100 square feet)**

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<sup>5</sup> See Exhibit 13: Watson Library Group Meeting Rooms.

- Purposes: Storing supplies for coffee/tea time, and serving any event that would need these facilities as well.
- Facilities: sink, cabinets, microwaves, no refrigerator
- **Copy room (50 square feet)**
  - Facilities: Photocopier, Fax
- **Office area (150 square feet)**
  - Office for the GSC's Director
- **Hallway area**
  - Facilities: Day lockers

### **Configuration B**

- **Large main space (1,000 square feet)**
  - Purposes: Individual and group study, holding of office hours, grading, meeting with groups and students
  - Facilities: Six computer and two printing stations, tables, chairs
- **Two conference rooms/classrooms (250 square feet each)**
  - Purposes: Workshops, meetings, dissertation boot camps, professional development events
  - Facilities: Conference table, chairs, whiteboards, projector
- **Thirty carrel rooms (30 square feet each)**
  - Purposes: TA meetings, individual study
  - Facilities: Desk, chairs, outlet
  - Glass faced, and surrounding main space to encourage visibility and interaction
- **Kitchen (100 square feet)**
  - Purposes: Storing supplies for coffee/tea time, and serving any event that would need these facilities as well.
  - Facilities: sink, cabinets, microwaves, no refrigerator
- **Copy room (50 square feet)**
  - Facilities: Photocopier, Fax
- **Office area (150 square feet)**
  - Office for the GSC's Director
- **Hallway area**
  - Facilities: Day lockers

Other configurations are, of course, possible. In consultations with GSAC, the Committee found a consensus view that a combination of large and small spaces, while retaining the use of the GFL for major events and receptions, comprised the ideal use of a Graduate Student

Center. In general, an amount of space considered adequate for the purposes of a Graduate Student Center is 2,500-3,000 square feet.

We also wish to reemphasize the excellent execution of the Judith Lee Stronach Center of the Department of Art History and Archaeology as a reference and an inspiration for a future Graduate Student Center.

The Committee purposely demurred from finalizing further details of space allocation, reserving them to the office of the Dean of GSAS and GSAC.

### **Survey of Available Space and Appropriateness of Usage as GSC**

*Nota bene:* The Committee is especially indebted to Christine M. Sala, of the Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, for her assistance in providing necessary information.

THE Committee examined space currently available within Columbia. We have identified six possible locations for an interim Graduate Student Center.

1. 538 West 114<sup>th</sup> Street (NYC BBL 1-1885-52) – Brownstone shell
2. Space within Earl Hall<sup>6</sup>
3. The former Psychology Library (Schermerhorn 4)<sup>7</sup>
4. The former Chemistry Library (Chandler 4)<sup>8</sup>
5. The former Biological Sciences Library (Fairchild 6)<sup>9</sup>
6. The former Physics Library (Pupin 8)<sup>10</sup>

The brownstone shell, at 538 West 114<sup>th</sup> Street, is the former Phi Gamma Delta fraternity house and has been owned by the University since 2002. It is sandwiched between other fraternity houses on 114<sup>th</sup> Street.

Based on information provided by Facilities, we believe the brownstone shell to contain 5,298 square feet.

Earl Hall is a space dedicated to students, and may be underutilized, especially given its substantial second-floor open area, which may be repurposed as a Graduate Student Center. However, the Committee is sensitive to the religious, community, and student life entities that currently do occupy offices in Earl Hall. The Committee estimates that 1,475 square feet

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<sup>6</sup> See Exhibit 11: Floor Plan and Elevation of Earl Hall.

<sup>7</sup> See Exhibit 7: Floor Plan of the former Psychology Library.

<sup>8</sup> See Exhibit 8: Floor Plan of the former Chemistry Library.

<sup>9</sup> See Exhibit 9: Floor Plan of the former Biological Sciences Library.

<sup>10</sup> See Exhibit 10: Floor Plan of the former Physics and Astronomy Library.

is available in Earl Hall (the second-floor auditorium and the first-floor lounge), given that the offices are occupied by other entities.

The four science libraries present a more appropriate possibility. They comprise 2,643-5,414 square feet, with Chemistry being the largest<sup>11</sup>. After discussing the pros and cons of each individually as well as vis-à-vis the brownstone, the Committee summarizes its observations as follows:

- All of the science departments probably have or are proposing plans relating to their former libraries, many of which involve repurposing them as lab space.
- All four science libraries are located on the north end of campus, in close proximity to many departments in the arts and sciences, as well as other graduate and professional schools. The brownstones, on the other hand, are located on 113<sup>th</sup>-114<sup>th</sup> streets, among undergraduate housing and fraternities.
- Three of the four science libraries are relatively inaccessible. Physics/Astronomy, Chemistry, and Biological Sciences are located deep within their buildings.
- Some of the former science libraries, notably Chemistry and Biological Sciences, have security protocols associated with their respective buildings, hindering accessibility.
- Renovating a shelled brownstone will cost approximately \$5-\$10 million, while renovating and repurposing a former science library will likely cost far less.

For these reasons, it is reasonable to suppose that one of the former science libraries, in particular the former Psychology and Biological Sciences Libraries, might prove an ideal location for an interim Graduate Student Center, for the following reasons:

- The former Psychology and Biological Sciences Libraries are located on the north end of campus, near many academic departments. Graduate students will be more inclined to visit a location near their departments, than one several blocks away amidst undergraduate housing.
- Recent moves by several departments to spaces near UTS have diminished the possibility and potential for interdisciplinary interaction. By their centralized location, and their relative proximity to UTS, the former Psychology and Biological Sciences Libraries can help rebuild some of the academic communities that have once existed but have since been dispersed or disrupted by departmental moves based on space considerations.

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<sup>11</sup> For a full accounting and summary of former science library space, see Exhibit 12: Master Summary of Available Space Options.

- The former Psychology Library is in a very accessible location in the ground floor of Schermerhorn Hall. Graduate students will prefer a location immediately accessible near a building entrance, rather than one buried deep within.
- The former Psychology and Biological Sciences Libraries contains approximately 2,643 and 4,244 square feet of space<sup>12</sup>, respectively, and fits within the projected space requirements of a Graduate Student Center of 2,500-3,000 square feet.
- The former Psychology Library is the smallest of the four science libraries, and thus represents the lightest use of space resources.
- The former Biological Sciences Library is in least need of renovation, and thus represents the lightest use of financial resources.
- Repurposing the former Psychology or Biological Sciences Library as an interim Graduate Student Center would not deprive the Department of Psychology or Department of Biological Sciences of any long-term lab space. Aside from the Graduate Student Center being “interim” in nature, Psychology and Biological Sciences are slated for a long-term expansion in lab space as the prime beneficiaries in both the Northwest Corner Building and the upcoming Jerome L. Greene Mind, Brain, and Behavior Center.
- Repurposing the former Psychology or Biological Sciences Library as an interim Graduate Student Center would not displace any existing use of space by any entity.
- Renovating the former Psychology or Biological Sciences Library would be far more cost-effective than renovating a brownstone.

The Committee is well aware of the formal processes for obtaining such space as well as the role of Facilities. First, the appropriate administrator, in this case, the Dean of GSAS, must submit a formal Project Request to Facilities regarding a need for additional space, renovations or both. Such requests originating from GSAS must, for obvious reasons, be coordinated with the Office of the Executive Vice President for Arts and Sciences.

After receiving such a request, Facilities Planning will generally help the client define a more structured “space program,” setting forth how the space will be used, and thus, its particular characteristics, such as location, size, room types, special facilities, etc. At the same time, the extent of financial resources to create and maintain such spaces must be defined. Once these have been determined, potentially suitable spaces can be identified and studied to determine their feasibility.

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<sup>12</sup> The Committee is aware that portions of the former Biological Sciences Library have already been repurposed as office and lab space for bioinformaticians. The Committee was unable to discern the precise square footage remaining, and thus retains the 4,244 square foot figure for the sake of completeness.

It is not good planning to start out by identifying a space and then trying to fit the program within it. The proper process is to see what functional requirements need to be met and then find the most suitable space to meet them.

**Thus, in the interests of best practices in space planning, the Committee will not formally endorse the Psychology or Biological Science Library as a site for the interim Graduate Student Center. Rather, the Committee will only endorse the goals and creation of an interim Graduate Student Center, and point out that locations do exist that fit within the broad parameters of such a Graduate Student Center.**

### **Availability of Funding**

DURING his tenure, Dean Emeritus, Henry Pinkham was committed to the creation of a Graduate Student Center as a key priority for GSAS. His successor, Interim Dean Carlos Alonso, also believes in the importance of a Graduate Student Center. A portion of GSAS's reserves are ready to be used immediately for the purpose of an interim Graduate Student Center. It is not immediately clear as to the size of the reserves at this time, as monies have been spent since, but it was indicated at approximately \$2.5 million as of April 2010.

In addition, it is highly plausible that a high-profile Graduate Student Center with attendant naming rights would be attractive to a wide array of donors interested in graduate education. The Toni Stabile Center at the Graduate School of Journalism and the Judith Lee Stronach Center at the Department of Art History and Archaeology are examples of a successfully executed student center concept, which resulted in both high student usage and donor (and estate) satisfaction.

In all things, the Committee seeks the best and most efficient use of the available resources for the realization of an interim Graduate Student Center. Since facilities exist with mild to moderate levels of required renovation, and since the proposed interim Graduate Student Center's layout is both conventional and easily envisioned, the Committee believes that a successful interim Graduate Student Center can be achieved relatively quickly and inexpensively.

### **Recommendations to the University Senate**

THE University Senate has protocols for "resolutions" and "recommendations." Resolutions are policy decisions that become final upon concurrence of the Board of Trustees. Recommendations, on the other hand, are official endorsements by the University Senate of a particular policy. As the University Senate focuses on governance, not on day-to-day

administration, it would be improper for the University Senate to pass a resolution approving of a Graduate Student Center. It would also be a departure from existing processes by which space allocations are approved and assigned.

The University Senate, may, however, pass a recommendation endorsing a particular policy or project. Accordingly, the Committee respectfully submits the following recommendation to the University Senate for its consideration.

#### RECOMMENDATION ON A GRADUATE STUDENT CENTER

WHEREAS, interdisciplinary interaction in an academic community is a key institutional priority for Columbia University, an idea broadly endorsed by faculty as crucial for comprehensive graduate education; and

WHEREAS, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows have expressed a strong desire to strengthen the academic community via increased interdisciplinary interaction in formal and informal contexts; and

WHEREAS, existing facilities on both the Morningside and Medical campuses are unsuited to increasing interdisciplinary interaction or building an academic community among graduate and postdoctoral fellows; and

WHEREAS, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows are the only academic constituency at Columbia University which does not have a dedicated space; and

WHEREAS, proposals for a Graduate Student Center have in the past been discouraged by both lack of space and funds, both of which are available at present; and

WHEREAS, a Graduate Student Center would enhance the quality and competitiveness of Columbia University's Master's, Ph.D., and postdoctoral programs relative to our peers, almost all of which already have such centers; and

WHEREAS, the Committee on Campus Planning and Physical Development has successfully executed its mandate to "advise the administration and the Trustees on faculty, student and staff concerns, priorities and particular projects" by producing the attached report on the rationale, needs, and feasibility of a Graduate Student Center.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED

That the University Senate endorses the conclusions of the report and respectfully recommends the President and Trustees of Columbia University to consider the creation of an interim Graduate Student Center; and

BE IT RECOMMENDED

That a feasibility study be conducted into an interim Graduate Student Center.

## Exhibits

### Exhibit 1: Pictures of Departmental Lounges and Other Spaces (Morningside)



Classics Grad Student Office (Hamilton 618)



Classics Porter Library (Hamilton 617)



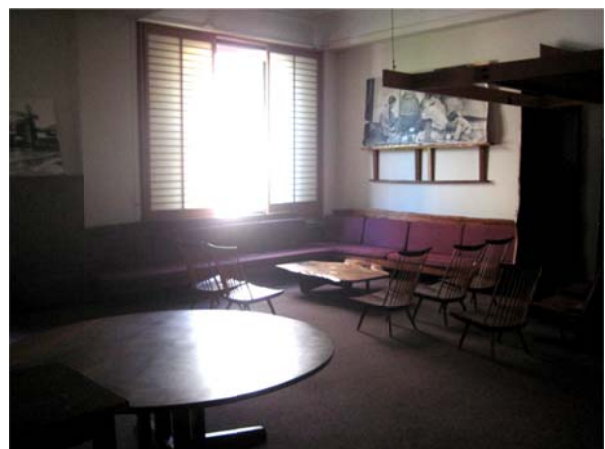
Slavic Reading Room (Hamilton 713)



Germanic Languages Lounge (Hamilton 310)



Music Lounge (Dodge 606)



EALAC Lounge (Kent 403)



Philosophy Lounge (Philosophy 714)



French Lounge (Philosophy 519)



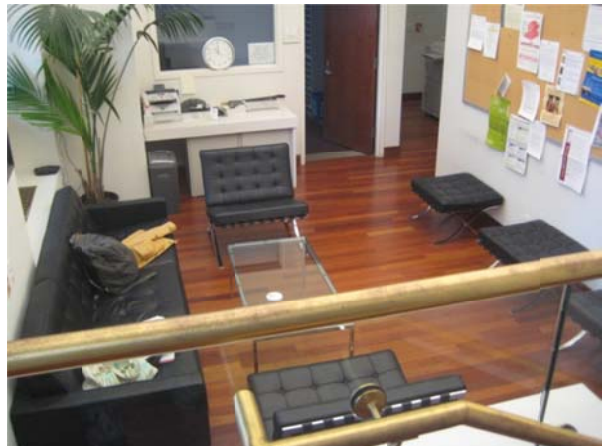
MESAAS Lounge (Knox 401B)



MESAAS Reading Room (Knox 401C)



Sociology Lounge/Mailroom (Knox 501D)



Religion Lounge (80 Claremont 1<sup>st</sup> Floor)



GSAPP Lounge/Cafeteria (Avery Basement)



DEES Work Room (Schermmerhorn 553)



DEES Lounge (Schermmerhorn 552)



DEES Grad Student Office (Schermmerhorn 551)



Anthropology Grad Student Office  
(Schermmerhorn Extension 470)



Anthropology Sheldon Schep Library  
(Schermmerhorn Extension 457)



Anthropology Murphy-Fried Lounge  
(Schermerhorn Extension 465)



E3B Graduate Student Office  
(Schermerhorn Extension 1020)



History Graduate Student Lounge  
(Fayerweather 611-613)



History Graduate Student Office  
(Fayerweather 611-613)



Statistics Ph.D. Office (SSW 1023)



Statistics M.A. Lounge (SSW 902)



Statistics Tutoring Room (SSW 901)



Economics Ph.D. Office (IAB 1036)



Economics TA Office (IAB 1006A)



PoliSci Rogers Common Room (IAB 707)



PoliSci Graduate Student Workspace (IAB 7)



Biological Sciences Uris Lounge (Fairchild 900)



Astronomy Grad Student Office (Pupin 1333)



Physics First-Year Ph.D. Office (Pupin 727)



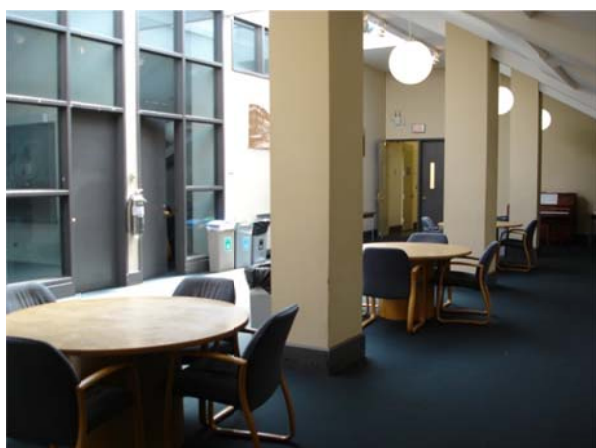
Physics Upper-Class Ph.D. Office (Pupin 929)



Chemistry Turro Group Common Area  
(Chandler 755)



Chemistry Lounge (Havemeyer 7)



Chemistry Meeting Rooms (Havemeyer 7)



Math Upper-Class Ph.D. Office (Math 408)



Math 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>-Year Ph.D. Office (Math 206A/B)

**Exhibit 2: Pictures of Departmental Lounges and Other Spaces (Medical)**



Bard Hall Dormitory Main Lounge



Bard Hall Dormitory Recovery Room



Irving Cancer Research Center Commissary



ICRC Conference Room

**Exhibit 3: Pictures of the Judith Lee Stronach Center**



Entryway



Meyer Schapiro's Library



Computer Lab Area



TA Meeting Rooms



TA Meeting Rooms



Lounge and Coffee Area



Lounge and Coffee Area



Side View

**Exhibit 4: Rendering and Description of the Judith Lee Stronach Center<sup>13</sup>**

“This summer the Department began construction on the Judith Lee Stronach Center at the east end of the 8th floor of Schermerhorn Hall. The project is funded by a generous bequest from the Estate of Judith Lee Stronach ('69 MA), an alumna and a great supporter of the arts and Columbia.



Computer renderings of the Judith Lee Stronach Center, eastwall (top) and bird's eye view (bottom).

Professor Francesco Benelli and doctoral candidate Carolyn Yerkes, both architects as well as architectural historians, created the conceptual design for the space. As a nod to the Department's illustrious past, the entryway will showcase books and journals from Meyer Schapiro's library, in handsome oak and glass bookcases. A clerestory will allow natural light from the original oversized McKim, Mead and White windows to fill the entire Center. To enhance graduate student pedagogy, two glass-enclosed rooms will enable meetings with students individually, or in small groups. The Department's computer lab, equipped with scanners

and a printer, will be adjacent to these rooms so that teaching fellows can prepare their classes and collaborate with their peers.

The south side of the space is now an open common area to encourage faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates to interact in an informal social setting. The additions of a coffee service area, comfortable seating, and wi-fi access will provide ample inducements to make this the social hub of the Department. The common area will double as a reception space for gatherings with guest speakers after lectures, as well as a place that student groups, such as the Graduate Student Colloquium and the Film Federation, can use for informal panel talks and screenings. With all of these elements coming together in a harmonious design, the Judith Lee Stronach Center will give teaching fellows, as well as other graduate students, faculty, and undergraduate majors, a space that will stimulate the intellectual and social life of the Department.”

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<sup>13</sup> Excerpted from Fall 2009 departmental newsletter “826 Schermerhorn.”

Exhibit 5: Pictures of the Graduate Faculties Lounge

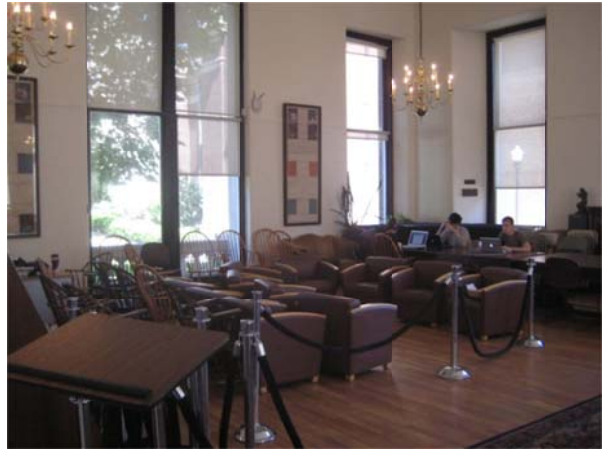
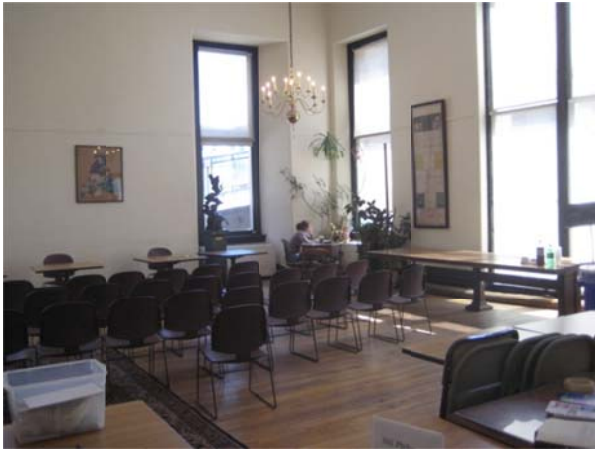




Exhibit 7: Floor Plan of the former Psychology Library

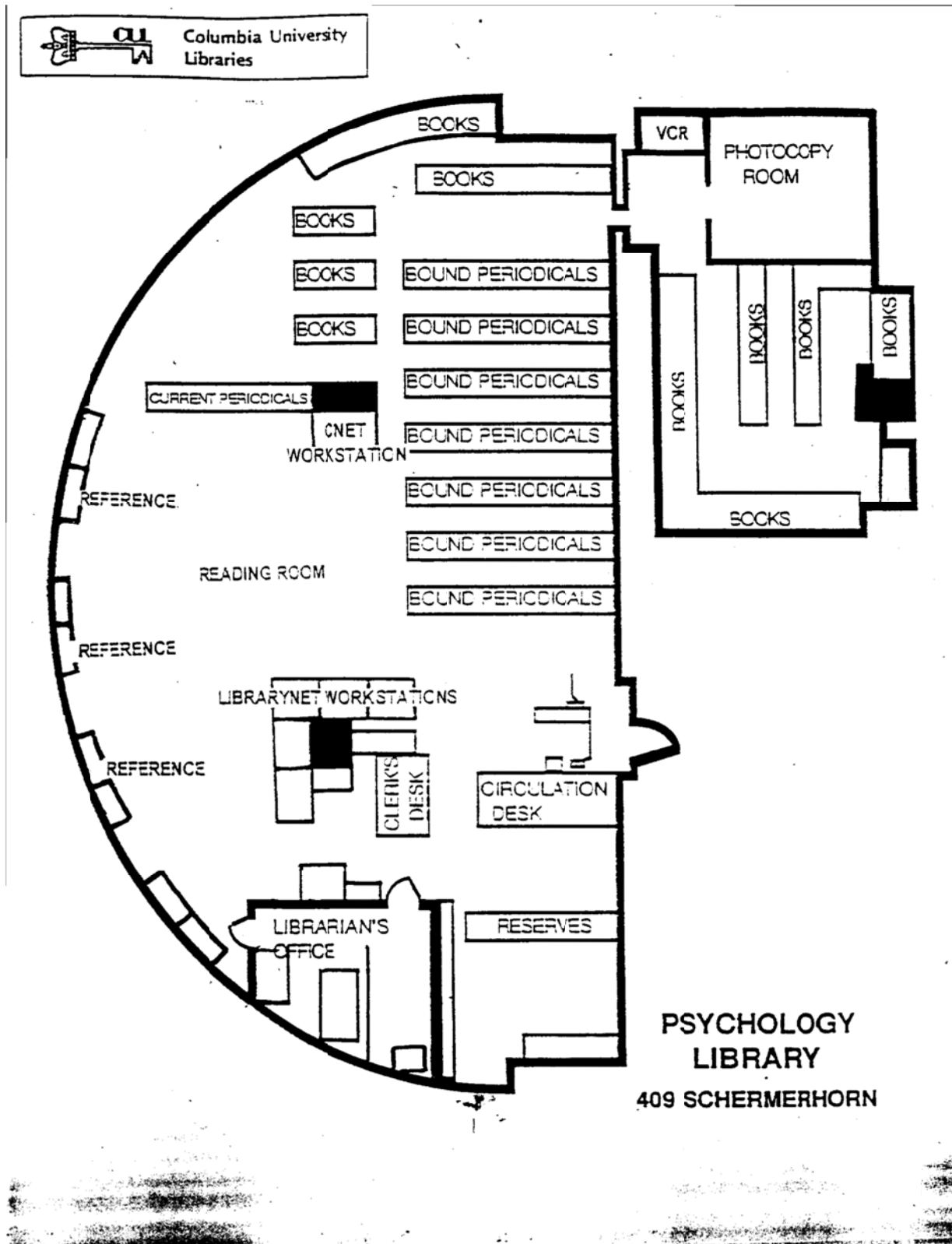




Exhibit 9: Floor Plan of the former Biological Sciences Library

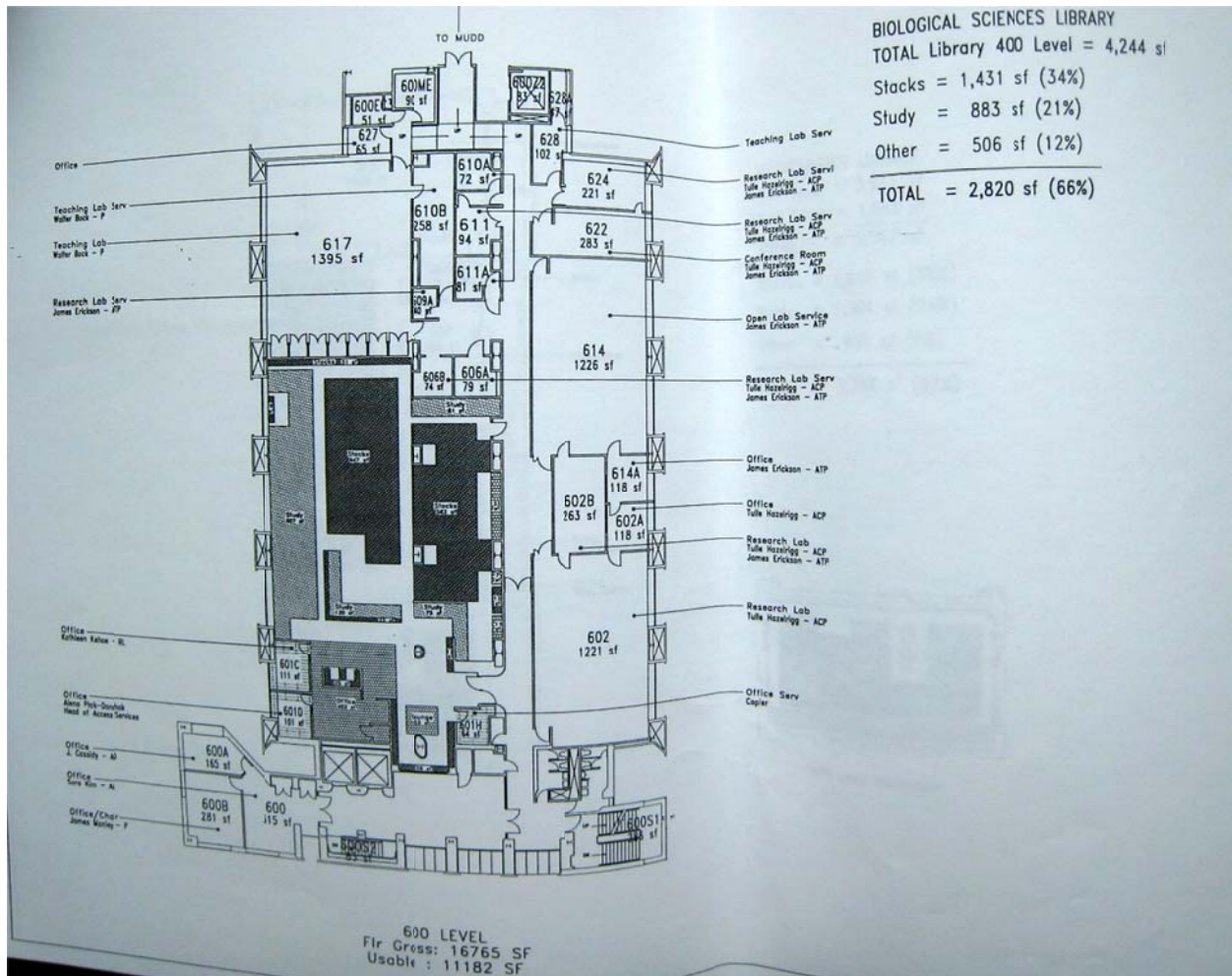


Exhibit 10: Floor Plan of the former Physics and Astronomy Library

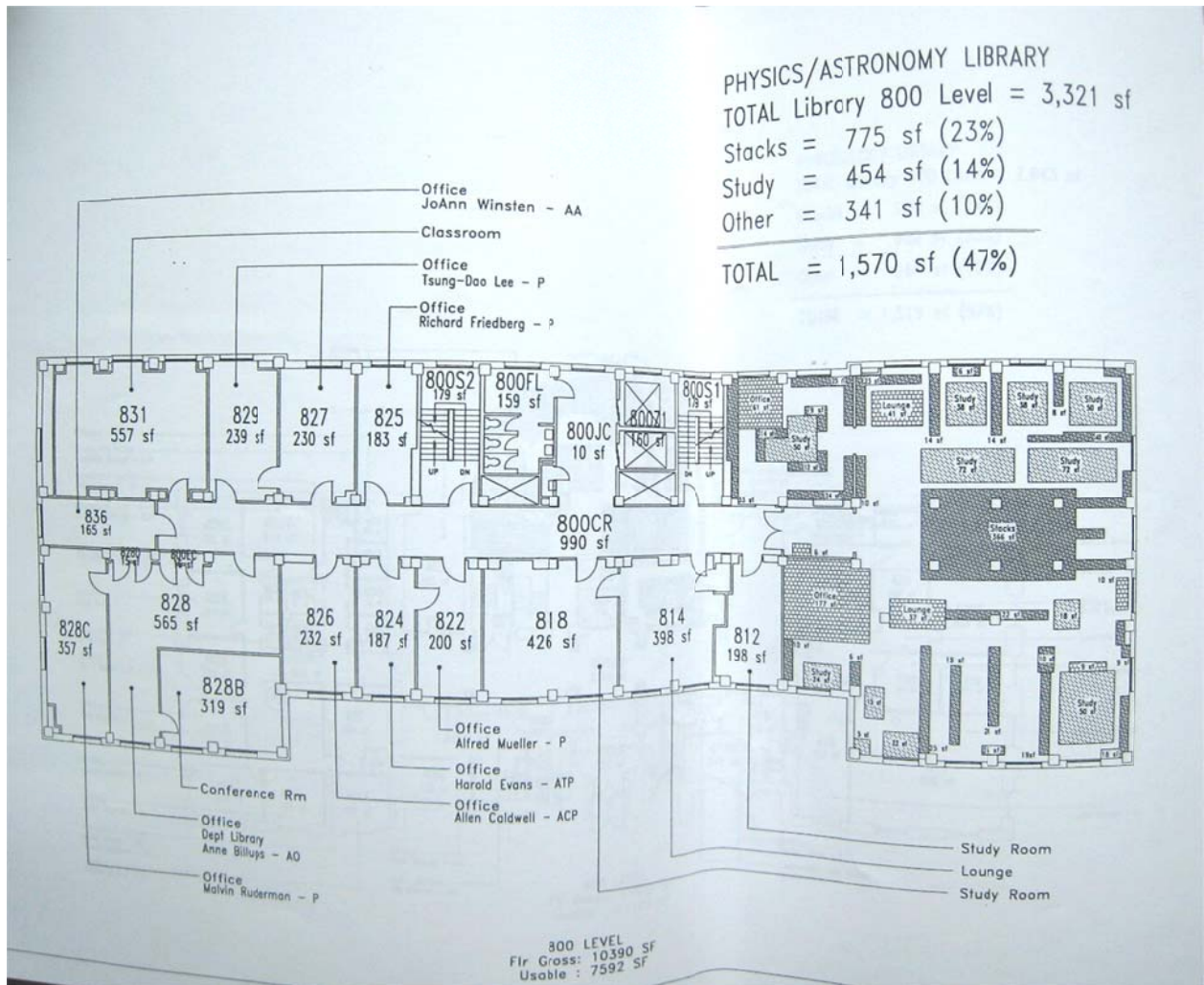
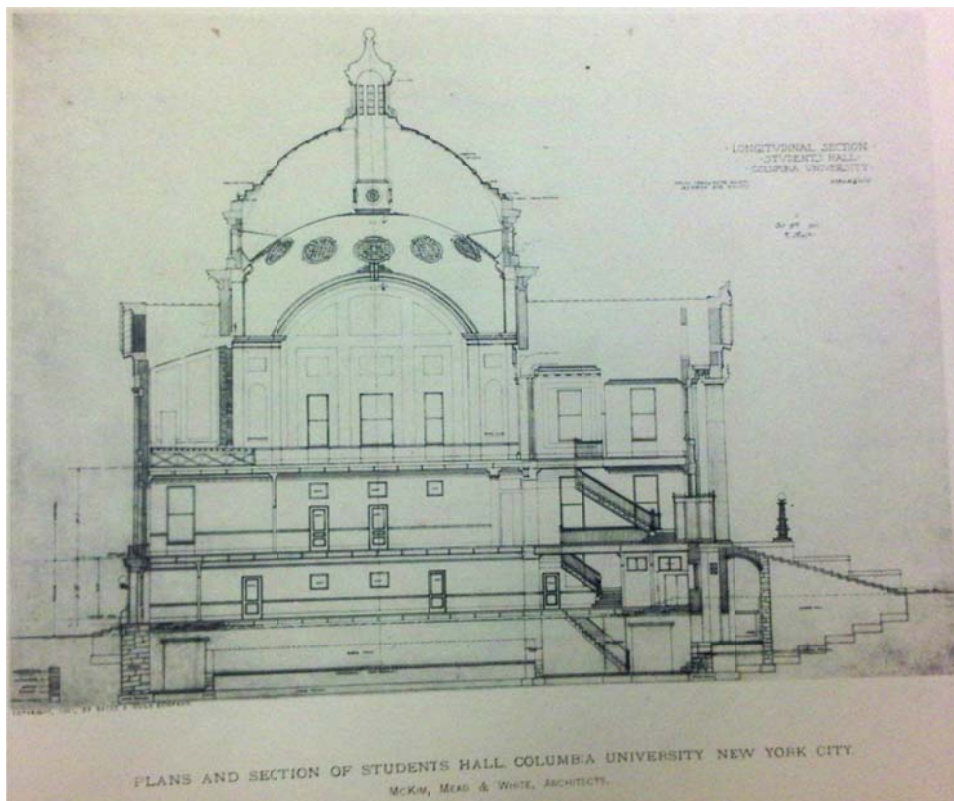
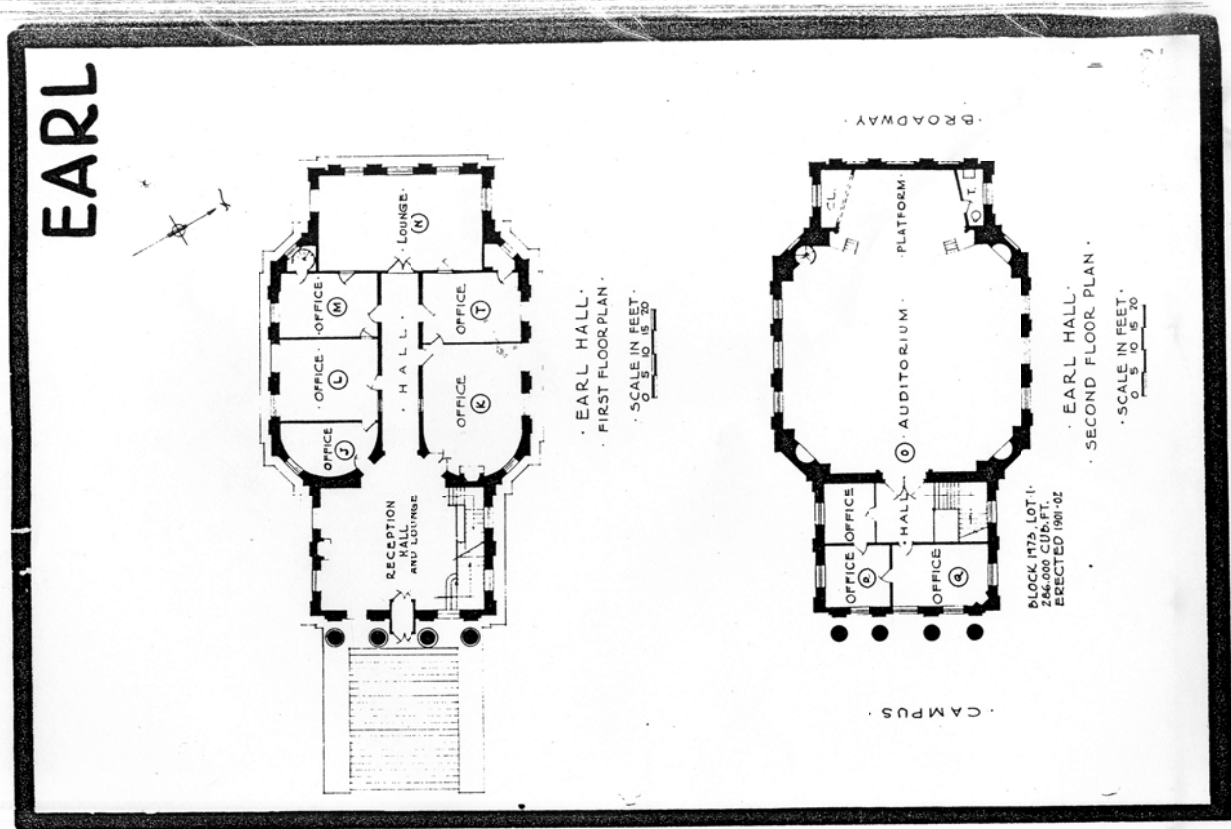


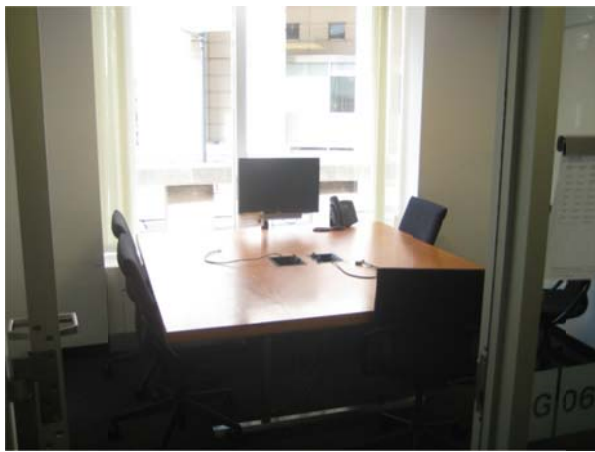
Exhibit 11: Floor Plan and Elevation of Earl Hall



**Exhibit 12: Master Summary of Available Space Options**

	Libraries				Other	
	<b>Biology</b>	<b>Physics</b>	<b>Chemistry</b>	<b>Psychology</b>	<b>Earl Hall Spaces</b>	<b>538 W. 114th St.</b>
Location	Fairchild 6	Pupin 8	Chandler 4	Schermerhorn 4		
Categories						
Stacks	1,431 sf	775 sf	1,877 sf	636 sf		
Study	883 sf	454 sf	798 sf	622 sf		
Other	506 sf	341 sf	554 sf	261 sf		
Open	1,424 sf	1,751 sf	2,185 sf	1,124 sf		
	<b>4,244 sf</b>	<b>3,321 sf</b>	<b>5,414 sf</b>	<b>2,643 sf</b>	<b>1,475 sf</b>	<b>5,298 sf</b>

**Exhibit 13: Watson Library Group Meeting Rooms**



Individual Group Meeting Room



Thirty-Four Group Rooms