Chapter 6

SPACE DESIGN AND REDESIGN

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In this practice-based chapter, I highlight key steps and offer guidelines for administrators embarking on the creation or redesign of advising space. A successful project requires careful planning, including a thorough analysis of existing space, identification and prioritization of goals, and development of a vision statement outlining desired outcomes of the project. Success also requires an unremitting attention to detail as multiple draft designs are reviewed. Throughout all phases of the project, administrators must be strong advocates for their objective; clearly communicate desired outcomes to planners, decorators, and architects, as well as their own stakeholders; and work collaboratively, offering ample opportunity for feedback from stakeholders. The reward is space that fully supports the advising mission and operations.

The adequacy and viability of advising space are essential components of administrative strategic planning and assessment. The design and functionality of advising space are integral to and support advising missions, goals, objectives, and student learning outcomes. For example, the physical location and décor of advising space send a message about the institutional role and mission of academic advising to students and parents before they ever meet with an advisor. Well-planned facilities contribute to all aspects of advising operations—from the efficient flow of student traffic to one-on-one conferences to distance advising. The professional space of full-time advisors and faculty members serves as a home-away-from-home, and it should be individualized to help advisors work efficiently and effectively with students.

Administrators typically receive only a few opportunities to remodel existing advising offices or to participate in the design and construction of a new space, so they need to be strong advocates for their strategic objectives in every step of the process. They must ensure that facilities planners, interior designers, and architects understand the advising mission and goals of the unit as well as the importance of academic advising to the institution. They must clearly describe advising and operational processes and lay out their priorities for creating space that conveys the advising mission, supports achievement of advising goals, and functionally facilitates all aspects of the advising process. They must review draft designs to ensure that the plans meet their established priorities and manage the change concomitant with refurbishing or redesigning extant space or moving to a newly constructed or remodeled unit. Finally, for each of these steps, administrators should collect information and offer ample opportunity for feedback from their stakeholders—advisors, administrative team members, and staff.

Measure Thrice, Cut Once: Administrative Planning Phase

Prior to meeting with facility planners, and before any blueprint is drawn, administrators must develop a clear vision for the outcomes they want to achieve through the redesign project. They should address the message they want the space to convey about the purpose of advising as well as functional parameters necessary to ensure that the new space will improve academic advising and unit operations. To develop a well thought-out, clearly articulated vision, administrators first gather information about both the external and internal factors that impact advising space. They may want to think of this process as a program review with a special focus on space.

External Factors

Administrators can use nationally recognized standards to guide the development of their vision as well as to support requests for specific spatial changes or desired project outcomes: the CAS Stan-

dards (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2005) (see Appendix C), FERPA (Electronic Privacy Information Center, n.d.; Separated Parenting Access & Resource Center, n.d.; Van Dusen, 2004), and the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) (U.S. Department of Justice, 2011). Administrators may need to educate designers and architects about CAS academic-advising standards as well as about the way FERPA is interpreted and implemented on campus. Designers and architects may need to educate administrators about ADA regulations. To adequately advocate for facilities that are "sensitive to the special needs of persons with disabilities" (CAS, p.13), administrators must also gain an understanding of how ADA regulations are interpreted and implemented on campus. Campus resources for acquiring this information include facilities planning offices and others responsible for the accommodations for students with disabilities (see p. 314). Administrators and planners arrive at a common understanding of these external standards as well as their interpretation and implementation on campus to achieve administrative goals.

Administrators also may want to gather ideas for the project by visiting similar departments or advising offices on campus or at other institutions. Ideally, a team representing multiple areas of expertise should participate in these visits (e.g., advising administrator, academic advisor, designer, facilities planner, and architect). Just as realtors, by observing how clients respond to various houses clarify their understanding of the features buyers want, designers and architects will gain a better understanding of the design outcomes that advising administrators want by accompanying them on these visits. Budgetary restrictions may prohibit travel, but on-campus and virtual visits via websites or webcasts may offer administrators viable low-cost options.

Whether going alone or as part of a team, advising administrators should take detailed notes about each unit they visit, noting design and operational features they like and find applicable to their own unit or department. Ideas from these visits subsequently can be incorporated into the administrative vision statement. In addition to examining professional standards and gathering ideas from other offices, administrators need to conduct a thorough review of their own advising mission and goals, strategic plans, advising program, and advising unit or departmental operations with a specific focus on space.

Internal Administrative Analysis and Review

To develop a clear, data-based vision for the goals they wish to achieve through the redesign project, administrators must conduct an internal review of advising programming, advising and operational processes, and technology. A good review will yield information identifying the ways in which space, décor, furnishings, and processes should change to promote and support high quality advising. Because advising mission statements and strategic plans drive advising programming and its delivery, administrators might want to start creating the vision statement by reviewing these documents.

Three simple questions should guide the administrative review: What works? What does not work? What would be ideal? Other useful, specific questions for administrators to ask as part of their review include the following:

- Have advising responsibilities changed since the current mission was written? If so, what associated space, furniture, and technology changes will facilitate the difference in responsibilities?
- Does the current design and décor of the unit or department satisfactorily convey advising mission and goals? For example, administrators of professional business-college advising units may seek a crisp, clean, professional décor, whereas administrators of advising units for first-year students may seek space that exudes warmth by using comfortable, informal furniture, and plenty of brochures and handouts.
- Do new institutional strategic goals or initiatives have implications for academic advising? If so what are the associated space, décor, furniture, and technology needs? Will strategic plans, for example, require additional advisors, room for group advising, teaching space, or technology for interactive distance registration of international students?
- What space specifications will likely be needed in 5 years? In 10 years?

Specific items for administrators to consider as part of their review include the annual advising cycle, spaces for one-on-one advising, and unit or departmental space and operations.

The annual advising cycle. Administrators should examine the advising cycle for the whole year.

- At certain times of the year is advising

offered to groups (e.g., orientation)? If so, is current space adequate for group advising in terms of size, furnishings, and technology?
- Is advisor office seating for two (advisor and student) sufficient or are parents included in some conferences (e.g., orientations)?
- Academic departments may not have an advising reception area; students may go directly to their advisor's office for appointments. How is the traffic handled during busy times, such as registration and drop-add dates? Extra chairs in hallways? Sign-up sheets? Online scheduling?

Spaces for one-on-one advising. Administrators will want to determine the ways in which the space, décor, and technology in current individual advising offices or cubicles contribute to or hamper the advising process. CAS (2005) provides guidance for this analysis (see Appendix C). Questions for administrators to consider might include the following:

- Does the space ensure privacy and confidentiality? (p. 13)
- Will the spaces accommodate wheelchairs? (pp. 10, 13)
- Are offices or cubicles configured in ways that facilitate one-on-one interactions regardless of whether advisors and students are working together with paper handouts or consulting electronic resources on the computer? (p. 13)
- Are advisor desks, computers, or work stations ergonomically sound? For example, do advisors need to twist their arms, necks, or backs to work with students? Is lighting adequate? Can advisors adjust it to reduce glare on computer screens? (p. 6)
- Because they increasingly use electronic resources, calendars, and student information systems, do advisors have adequate computer setups? (pp. 7, 12) For example, do advisors need dual screens, mice, and keyboards so that students can use their student portals to locate resources while advisors use administrative portals to access information systems?
- Are offices safe for advisors? (pp. 6, 11, 13) Do advisors deal with difficult or angry students and parents? Are emergency buttons needed?
- Is sufficient space available for storage, student handouts, brochures, and so forth? (p. 13)
- What does the décor convey to students? (p. 13)

Office or department spaces and operations. One-on-one academic advising is typically conducted within a departmental or office space. Administrators must consider the physical and operational contexts within which advisors work as well as individual advising space. For example, are departmental meeting, work, and break rooms adequate in terms of size, location, and technology? Conducting a thorough analysis of traffic flow—the process by which students, parents, and members of the public find their way to the building, unit or department, and their advisor—is especially important.

- Is the building's location clearly marked on maps and campus directional signs?
- For advising units with centralized reception areas, how do students check in with staff? How are advisors notified that students have arrived for their appointments? How do students find their way to their advisor's office?
- What in the process works well and what does not work well? Could changes in space, design, technology, or procedures improve the efficiency of the process?

To gain an accurate, comprehensive perspective on space and operational processes, administrators need input at the informational gathering stage from all stakeholders—persons who will be affected by the changes. Stakeholders may raise issues that surprise administrators. Their views may be more diverse than administrators had imagined and they may identify space problems that had not previously caught administrator attention. Inclusiveness also creates buy-in for the design process and ultimately for the newly designed space. Every space—advising offices or cubicles, reception areas, administrative offices, work and break rooms, and conference spaces—should be evaluated from the perspective of the personnel that inhabit it: advisors, administrators, staff, student employees, advisees, and members of the public.

Administrators may want to develop a survey to collect stakeholder input. To gain candid responses, they might use an anonymous survey with open-ended questions such as the following:

- What aspects of your current workspace (e.g., lighting, technology, décor, structure) work well?
- What aspects of your current workspace do not work well?
- What aspects of current processes (e.g., traffic flow) work well?
- What aspects of current processes do not work well?
- What does an ideal workspace or process entail?

Open-ended survey questions take more administrative time and effort to compile, but they offer stakeholders the opportunity to respond freely. They also have the potential to reveal design or functional issues that administrators have not previously considered.

Armed with the results of their external review and their internal analysis, administrators are ready to identify their goals and priorities for the project. They should compile three lists: space features and processes that work (features they wish to maintain through the redesign); space features and processes that do not work (items to be corrected through the project); and a wish list of ideal space, process, and technology features and ideas. For substantial projects, the administrator may make very long lists, but stakeholders most likely have cited the most critical issues repeatedly throughout the review. From these compilations, administrators should identify the three to five priority goals for the project and share them with stakeholders.

No matter the size of the project, the advising administrator will not get every wish-list item. However, some of the issues that inspired the wish list may be addressed or achieved through the project in indirect ways. For example, a top priority for an administrator might be to locate every advisor in an office with a window. Project design limitations may make this goal unachievable; however, offices fitted with glass transoms and situated directly across from windowed offices will receive natural light. Even so, administrators should consider achieving goals beyond their top priorities as a bonus. The most important objectives, which represent administrative priorities, serve as the rubrics against which to review draft designs as well as the key points to use in advocating for specific features and changes with facilities planners, designers, and architects during the design and post move-in phases.

The administrative planning phase involves substantial work. Without it administrators cannot develop a clear, data-based vision for the redesign project. While the preparatory steps are needed to identify the administrative goals for the remodel, a clear vision statement creates the foundation for working effectively with facilities planners.

Developing a Vision Statement

After establishing goals and setting priorities for the project, administrators need to prepare a written vision statement for it. The vision statement should include a description of academic advising as well as set forth the goals and priorities for the project. First, the administrator usually concentrates on the description of the role, purpose, and associated processes of academic advising and the reasons that these elements drive the request for a new design or remodel. In writing the description, administrators must keep in mind the audience—facilities planners, designers, and architects who may never have received academic advising and who most likely have no idea of the integral role advising plays in students' educational experience—by steering clear of professional jargon and seeking analogies with which readers might have familiarity. For example, administrators can explain that a central reception area for advising functions very much like the waiting room in a doctor's office. A well-written vision statement should give planners, designers, and architects a clear understanding of the role and purpose of advising and its associated operational processes.

Administrators need to provide supporting data and rationales for every goal. For example, if an administrator wants to eliminate cubicles and provide a private office for each advisor, she or he might cite relevant FERPA and CAS standards and provide fact-based anecdotes. Specific examples (minus identifying details) of sensitive student cases (e.g., eating disorders, mental illness, disabilities, family problems, etc.) are effective tools; hearing powerful narratives may inspire designers who generate plans to create designs that go beyond minimal legal requirements to more fully support advisor and student needs.

The completed vision statement should be distributed to all internal stakeholders and facilities planners. At this point, an administrator is prepared to sit down with planners for the design phase of the project.

Design Phase: Details, Details, Details

The design process can take a matter of weeks or months and represents a huge administrative commitment of time and energy. A successful design phase requires persistent adherence to key goals

and priorities; clear, collaborative communication with designers and internal stakeholders; and an unremitting attention to detail. Regardless of the size of the project, administrators should review the written vision statement with facilities planners and architects in a face-to-face meeting so he or she can answer questions and ensure that they adequately understand the advising process with attendant esthetic and functional needs. Planners with a clear understanding of the purpose and processes of advising will more likely deliver designs that achieve desired administrative goals and priorities. Administrators bear the responsibility for ensuring that designers and planners gain this understanding.

After discussing the vision statement with administrators, facilities professionals will offer ideas and plans. Administrators must ensure that the designs achieve the outlined unit goals. To clearly communicate with the specialist planners, designers, and architects, administrators must learn their language and use that verbiage in reviews and feedback. They should ask for clarifications for terms and symbols used in the plans that they do not understand as well as for unfamiliar terminology used during design-review meetings. Administrators also need to understand design parameters. Institutional planning offices, for example, may use standardized office sizes based on a position within the institution hierarchy (e.g., a director gets x amount of square feet and an advisor gets y amount of square feet of office space). Restroom size and number, signage, and room numbering systems also may be set campus-wide. The planning team and administrator should revisit project goals and parameters on a regular basis when reviewing designs.

The design review process is cyclical and typically includes the following steps:

1. Planners present and discuss draft designs with administrators.
2. Administrators review the designs and seek feedback from stakeholders.
3. Administrators compile questions and feedback and share with planners.

These three steps involve multiple meetings. Formal, detailed notes should be maintained for each meeting and the notes should be referenced frequently throughout the process. A uniform approach for both notes and feedback provides structure for the review and creates an efficient way to return to previous decisions or to reference notes. Therefore, administrators may want to develop a standard review process for their staff and a template for providing feedback to facilities planners. Administrators may identify personnel with specific types of expertise to serve on a review team (e.g., someone with technology experience to review each plan for outlets, reception staff member to look over the strategy for handling student traffic, etc.). Each draft design must be painstakingly examined; a seemingly small oversight, such as a missing outlet or a doorway too small to accommodate a wheelchair, can easily thwart administrative goals for technology and accessibility.

Depending on the scope of the design project (i.e., refurbishment, remodel, or construction of new space), those participating in the design phase most likely will address the following issues:

- size and configuration of offices, reception areas, work spaces, break rooms, and storage locations;
- electrical and utility components (lighting, outlets, phone jacks, etc.);
- choices for furniture, paint, carpet, tile, and so forth;
- technology (telecommunications, computers, copiers, printers, projectors, flat screens, networking, etc.); and
- signage.

As they review plans for these elements of design, administrators should keep a number of goal and special-need factors in mind:

- Will the plans achieve the top three to five goals identified in the evaluation process? Do they address additional needs (which would be a bonus)? Does each revised plan satisfactorily correct problems or address concerns raised in the previous draft?
- Institutional planners should pay attention to accessibility issues, but if planners do not initiate the conversation, administrators should address it. Do doors and individual offices have sufficient space for wheelchairs? Is the advising unit or department accessible? Can persons with disabilities access all advising spaces? Is the technology liable to cause difficulties for, as opposed to help, persons with disabilities?

Universal design refers to the "design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design" (Connell et al.,

1997). The North Carolina State Center for Universal Design provides guiding principles on a website that administrators might find helpful: http://www.ncsu.edu/www/ncsu/design/sod5/cud/about_ud/udprinciplestext.htm). Also, Lanterman and Shuttic (2009) offered guidelines for universal design as it pertains to advising and advising facilities.

Administrators also need to be aware of special needs among their staff. For example, advisors with sight impairments may struggle in offices with light that glares off of computer screens (CAS, 2005, p. 6). Other considerations for advisors and staff include the following:

- ergonomics. The administrator might consider bringing in an Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) representative, if available on campus, for a consultation; this expert may prove especially helpful when reviewing plans for workstations and furniture. OSHA representatives can determine, for example, whether keyboards can be attached in ways that prevent neck and shoulder problems, whether advisors can maintain eye contact without strain, and whether desk-chair designs might result in back problems. (CAS, 2005, pp. 6, 13)
- sustainability. Administrators should examine every element in the plan to ensure it will endure high-traffic daily use, conserve energy and water (windows and window treatments, heating, plumbing, and lighting) and reduce paper. Recycling containers should be built into the design. (CAS, 2005, p. 6, 3)
- signage, which contributes to the effective and efficient flow of student traffic. If possible, administrators should physically walk the traffic routes with the signage plans in hand. Planners usually discuss signage late in the remodeling or building phase.
- individual choice. What options will be made available to advisors regarding their office furniture and décor? For example, will each advisor have one set of shelves and two files cabinets, or will other configurations be available? Will all advisors have the same desk chair or will they be offered choices? Can advisors choose computer setups? Decisions regarding the extent of office individualization need to be made during the design phase.

In addition to working closely with planners and their internal review team, administrators must provide informational updates as well as ample opportunities to review plans and ask questions to all of their stakeholders. Such communication efforts help set expectations for the project, reduce the number of surprises and lessen their impact, and prepare stakeholders for the disruptions and changes that characterize any redesign project.

Moving In and Out: Managing Change

During the information gathering and design phases, administrators should be developing a plan to manage change. Will the department or advising office need to find temporary quarters? If so, administrators need to advocate for the most suitable and least disruptive temporary location, establish a time line for the move, and create a detailed plan for the temporary relocation. Administrators also need to plan for the department to transfer to its final location—whether back into remodeled space or a new building. Institutional planners typically provide checklists; however, administrators will want to incorporate the following into the plan:

- sufficient time to clean out individual offices and common spaces. Administrators may want to create teams or assign specific personnel to pack up communal offices, such as break, work, and conference rooms.
- sustainable practice. How can current furniture and other items be repurposed? Can old stationery be donated to pre-schools? Can computers be given to philanthropic organizations that ship them to developing countries? Can furniture be used by other institutional offices?
- individual office assignments. Establish office assignment criteria and designate space prior to the move.
- possible changes in office policies and procedures needed for the new space. For example, student sign-in systems may need revision as well as "procedures and guidelines consistent with institutional policy responding to threats, emergencies, and crisis situations" (CAS, 2005, p. 11). New policies and procedures should be developed prior to the completion of the project, ideally as a collaborative effort between administration and appropriate stakeholders. Administrators must ensure that all parties know and implement any changes.

After they have completed the planning and design phases and successfully negotiated their associated changes, administrators may want to heave a huge sigh of relief—as well as their file cabinets of project-related paperwork—but they should not discard their notes, designs, and vision statements on move-in day. Important and substantial work still lies ahead of them and these documents will be critical to their successful completion.

Punch Lists and Final Thoughts

Depending on the size of the redesign project, administrators will continue to work with facilities planners, designers, and architects from a few weeks (for refurbishing) to a year or more (for newly constructed buildings). During or immediately following move in, with final design plans in hand, administrators must carefully examine the completed space, décor, furnishings, and technology, noting all omissions, errors, damages (e.g., holes in walls or dings in doors from moving furniture), scratches, and nonfunctional equipment (e.g., sticking file cabinet drawers or poorly functioning technology). When compiled, these notes constitute a *punch list*, and administrators should not consider the project complete until every problem on the punch list has been addressed or resolved, a process that can take up to a year or more. Success in this final phase requires the same dogged persistence, clear communication, and strong advocacy as the design phase, and administrators should establish priorities for the punch list just as they did for the prioritized elements of project design.

In addition, if office operations or policies change as a result of the redesign, administrators should set aside time to work with staff on evaluating new policies and procedures, tweaking them as necessary. Finally, no matter the level of gains for the office or department, administrators need to prepare themselves for stakeholders who experience a sense of loss. For example, the advisor who cried out for private office space may lament the loss of community created by talking across cubicles. Standardized office sizes may mean that some faculty and professional advisors get larger offices but other advisors get smaller offices. A good communication plan can minimize, if not eliminate, disappointment in stakeholders.

Finally, the redesign or building project offers administrators a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity—one that is uncommonly demanding and requires more time than most administrators ever imagine at the onset of the project. However with careful planning, a well-defined vision, clear communication, strong advocacy, and unremitting attention to detail, administrators can navigate the project successfully, creating space that fully supports advising and leaves a lasting legacy for their department.

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