HARVARD HALL CLASSROOM RENOVATION PROGRAM EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Harvard Hall’s interior classroom renovation project, defined by innovative design for teaching and learning environments, will ensure its prominent role in supporting evolving pedagogies for decades to come.

Harvard Hall will be undergoing both an exterior restoration and interior classroom renovations during the summer and fall of 2019. An advisory team was formed for the programming phase for the classrooms project, which took place this past spring 2018 semester. The team was comprised of representatives from eight different administrative and college departments that have a stake in classrooms, learning spaces and instruction. The program effort also included outreach to faculty in the form of a classroom design workshop.

One classroom in Harvard Hall (room 202) was renovated in 2016, leaving four classrooms that were last renovated about 50 years ago. The scope of the programming phase for the interior was to assess the four remaining classrooms in a holistic manner with respect to innovative classroom design for the entire building, as well as the FAS classroom portfolio itself. The team’s goals included maintaining a variety of classroom layouts, seating capacities, flexibility levels and technologies to support diverse teaching and learning styles while balancing stakeholder’s priorities and addressing accessibility issues.

Existing Classrooms

Some notable observations from the team’s tour of the classrooms are as follows:

- **Room 201 (Large Lecture-style/flat floor, 140 seats):** Fixed seats are 16 per row, making the middle seats undesirable or unused. There are many significant historical details in the existing classroom that need to be maintained, similar to room 202.

- **Room 104 (Large Lecture-style/tiered floor, 150 seats):** The existing room proportions, tiered seats and aisles allow for intimate discussions between a large group of students and the instructor; a favorite among faculty and in high demand.

- **Rooms 102 & 103 (Small Lecture-style/fixed seats, 51 & 60 seats):** Mezzanine overhang in both rooms has a protruding, negative impact on the quality of the space. Contrary to the team’s assessments of these classrooms’ physical attributes, rooms 102 and 103 are heavily booked due to their quantity of seats and location in the yard.
Technology and Space Features in Classrooms

A survey about the importance of technology and space features in classrooms was distributed to faculty at the workshop to inform the design specification process. The most important features with over 85% of all respondents are multiple and moveable writing surfaces (whiteboards and blackboards), reconfigurable/moveable tables and/or chairs, single projector/display (versus multiple displays) and both wired and wireless connection to projector/display.

FAS Classroom Portfolio & Data Analysis

Scheduling and space data for both Harvard Hall and the entire FAS classroom portfolio was analyzed to better understand trends based on aligning course enrollments with classroom seat capacities (referred to as “right-sizing”). The following are a few notable take-aways from the analyses:

- In terms of number of courses offered\(^1\), there are approximately 1200 each semester with 77% (915 courses) having enrollments with 20 or fewer students. Regarding the classroom inventory, 39% of the classroom portfolio (about 147 classrooms) has 20 or fewer seats (illustrated in Figure 1). This stark contrast between the number classrooms with 20 or fewer seats compared to the number of courses with enrollments of 20 or fewer creates a range of scheduling challenges, most notably a shortage of small classrooms which in turn creates a limited availability of large classrooms (seating capacities between 50-100).

- Approximately 34% of FAS classrooms are centrally scheduled (by the Registrar’s Office of Office of Physical Resources and Planning, which serves as a proxy for the Registrar); the remaining 66% of classrooms are scheduled by individual departments, of which there are about seventy-two.

- The scheduling data revealed that Harvard Hall classrooms are mostly booked throughout the day yet the seat-fill utilization (seat capacity versus course enrollment data) averaged about 50%.

This shortage of small classrooms creates a “trickling up effect”, in that the vast number of small courses are scheduled in medium capacity classrooms, and mid-size courses are then being scheduled in the large classrooms, resulting in a low availability of large classrooms to accommodate large course enrollments, as well as low seat-fill

\(^1\) Course enrollments Fall 2017
utilization numbers. There are also other factors impacting a shortage of “right-sized” classrooms and low seat-fill utilization numbers that could be addressed administratively, including freeing up department-controlled classrooms for the Registrar to schedule, in addition to course balancing, (i.e., scheduling courses in more time blocks). It will be interesting to analyze the data after the new time-block schedule is implemented in the fall of 2018 to identify any improvements in scheduling class locations based on size and classroom layout configurations that accommodate teaching methods.

In consideration of this data analyses, the team realized there was an opportunity to begin to rebalance the portfolio to better match enrollment patterns by creating some smaller classrooms as part of the Harvard Hall project, and to use this data analysis to inform classroom design in the future.

Classroom Conceptual Layouts

The conceptual layouts below have been developed to address the goals, priorities and findings during the programming phase. A brief rational for each proposed classroom layout is on the following page.
Classrooms 102 & 103

There was a strong consensus that the protruding mezzanine overhang in both classrooms detracts from a positive teaching and learning experience and needed an architectural solution. The preferred option is to create two additional small classrooms underneath the ceiling, paired with flexible seating configurations for rooms 102 and 103. In addition to the two additional small classrooms which are in high demand and in short supply for the multitude of small courses, this solution also expands the lobby area, creating a more welcoming space and increasing the visibility of the classrooms.

Classroom 104

The existing lecture-style, tiered floor layout with an aisle between seating sections was the preferred option. Accessibility requirements will be further explored to develop the best configurations to maximize seating (between 110-120 seats) but keep the small, intimate feel of the space that instructors appreciate.

Classroom 201

The team-based learning layout with moveable tables and chairs, similar to room 202, is the preferred layout but with a target of 75-100 seats to accommodate large courses and four sections. Furniture and configuration options will be explored to determine maximum seat capacity.

Next Steps

Once funding for the project is finalized the detail design and target reductions of construction scope will be refined to conform to the budget allocations. The Advisory Team will stay involved during the design development phase, which is scheduled to finish up by mid-December 2018. Construction and bid documents will be completed by the end of March 2019 in order to meet the construction start date in June 2019.

---

1 Refer to the full program report for more details about the planning phase for the Harvard Hall classroom project.