

College of Arts and Sciences

Engaging the Heart, Mind and Spirit



Other Capital Projects: **\$3.75 million**

Background

The College of Arts and Sciences is seeking \$3.75 million to renovate spaces to provide students with flexible classrooms and support **other capital projects**. Flexible classrooms adapt to the teaching subject, method, and needs of faculty and students. They are configured to accommodate group work, presentations, or traditional lectures, all with the ability to move easily and freely.

In the College of Arts and Sciences, some classrooms are filled with lectures all day. Others are lined with computers and desks to blend technology with learning. Still others are filled with music rehearsals, biology labs and language lessons.

Classroom 204 in Serra Hall is the College of Arts and Sciences only flexible classroom. This classroom has seen it all. In the course of one week in a recent semester, the classroom hosted classes in calculus, English, sociology, political science, psychology, and communication studies. It is a flexible, multiuse classroom where every piece of furniture can move — including whiteboards, student desks and technology — to accommodate the learning style of students and adjust to the teaching style of the professor. It literally provides education on wheels.

Every day, this classroom reinvents itself. Each semester faculty members vie for the opportunity to teach in Serra 204 because the teaching options are endless. Currently USD is behind in implementing flexible classrooms. There is only one available to the College of Sciences. For students to be successful, more are needed.

Objective

Learning environments like this are the future of higher education. The College of Arts and Sciences hopes to renovate between five and 10 general-use classrooms

across campus. In funding the renovation of each flexible classroom, the college would name the classroom after the donor (or family) and thereafter the classroom would be referred by the donor's name.

To highlight the range of classes that can use radically flexible classrooms, here is a sample list of the classes taught in Classroom 204.

History Classes: Dr. Molly McClain uses the space for reenactments of the French Revolution, a task that could not be completed in a traditional classroom with immobile furniture and minimal open space. Students take on various roles such as members of the French aristocracy as well as members of the revolution. French art is displayed throughout multiple projectors or posted to the moveable tack boards. The ability for students to fully immerse themselves in this time period is far more memorable than reading about it in a textbook or learning about it in a lecture. History comes to life, making for deeper understanding and retention.

Mathematics Classes: Students in Dr. Perla Myers mathematics class have an active day in this classroom. She often starts with a mini lecture to bring concepts from the previous night's reading into focus. Afterward, she separates students into small groups to work with manipulatives, or use handheld white boards that can be distributed to the group and then hung on the wall for display and discussion. Students are able to explore, discuss and delve into concepts that deepen their understanding and retention of mathematical concepts.

Political Science Classes: Dynamics of the U.S. Congress are illuminated in Dr. Noelle Norton's congressional simulation class. Space and mobility are critical in this class as students take on the roles of Congress members — lobbying their colleagues, drafting bills, passing motions, and navigating committees. They need space to conduct meetings and to debate and all the while they

are reinforcing their knowledge of the strategies, subtleties and rules that drive our political system.

Impact

A flexible classroom design ensures that learning environments are always adaptable to disciplines and modes of learning. These learning spaces are designed to encourage interaction between students and faculty and create unique opportunities for retention, knowledge and more complex learning. The creation of these classrooms — where surfaces, equipment, tools, and technology can be modified — is an important step in promoting the university's approach to student-centered learning.

In the College of Arts and Sciences, class sizes are kept small, ranging from 15 to 35 students. This setting results in personal attention and engaged faculty-student interactions that are only possible in a small classes. Flexible classrooms bolster the impact of small class sizes by personalizing classroom space. With the addition of new flexible classrooms, the college could continue to match spaces with curriculum, and provide faculty with the tools they need to enhance the classroom experience, thereby creating new and unique opportunities for the intellectual, spiritual, emotional, social and cultural development of all students.

For More Information

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