





The concept was new for Price at the time. In fact, she says she had a difficult time at first visualizing what was being discussed. Because her colleagues had visited the d.school, the Institute of Design at Stanford, which has since published a 2012 book on manipulating space to ignite creativity, they had a better picture of the type of space being discussed. At the time of the USM team's grant proposal, their research was cutting edge, though Price notes there is evidence that more institutions are now embracing the importance of active learning spaces.

When Belhaven hired Price back as part

of its student development team, she was asked if she had any thoughts about using space to augment student success. "I said, 'Absolutely I've got some thoughts about it,'" Price recalls.

The result was the Wynn Kenyon Think Center, a designated study and teaching facility located inside the school's Hood Library. The center opened in September 2012.

What makes the Think Center unique, according to Price, is its adaptability: nearly every piece of furniture in the center rotates, slides, or modifies to accommodate

group sessions, backpacks, and laptops. Likewise, the technology in the center is wired for networking: students using the center's computers can share screens between units to collaborate with classmates, or they can connect laptops to one of several TV monitors for multiple viewers. Additionally, writing surfaces are virtually everywhere, from moveable whiteboards to "paper tables" that allow students to map out their thought processes.

Unlike the traditional library setting, students appreciate the Think Center because each student has the option to create his or her ideal setting, Price says. The mobility of the center's equipment allows for varied learning preferences—from processing with others to writing material out to concentrating individually—to be accommodated. "We encourage them to do what they need to with the space," says Price. And in contrast to a traditional computer lab, she explains, the Think Center is colorful, inviting, and flexible.

While the environment serves primarily as a study space, the abundant technology also lends itself to teaching. Price says professors are increasingly taking advantage of the Think Center for class sessions requiring intensive or collaborative use of technology that traditional classrooms do not accommodate.

While the Think Center provides students with freedom, it is also designed to offer ample support. Price, along with the rest of the student development staff, has her office inside the center. No one is ever more than a knock away from students in need, whether they have questions about using the computers or are seeking in-depth conversations about choosing majors and careers. Peer academic tutors are also stationed in the Think Center, so if a student or group hits a roadblock while studying, they can quickly find assistance.

Price says it is too early to determine the Think Center's impact on student outcomes, but she's excited for the potential



tors. This provided Kniseley with a much-needed sense of accountability, because each she time she returned she would share her scores with tutors.

"They encourage you and they motivate you to continue with your work," Kniseley says, noting that the laid-back and collaborative nature of the facility allows students to tackle homework assignments from all angles, which is especially helpful when working on a group project or presentation. "It really does help you think out loud, especially if you like to process things with other people," she says.

In fact, Kniseley was so impressed by the center she took a student employment position there working as a desk assistant. For many entering the Think Center for the first time, Kniseley is the first face they see—and that is just fine with her.

"I love the Think Center," she says. "I want every student at Belhaven to use the Think Center."

research it may yield. "This kind of space in higher education is kind of new, so there's a good deal to be learned about it," she says. According to Price, Belhaven is only the second school in Mississippi exploring space and student outcomes.

In the short term, the metric that Price says she is paying the most attention to is foot traffic. Part of the goal with the high-tech, customizable feel of the Think Center, Price explains, is to pique the curiosity of passing students. "We feel like we've done that," Price says. "In my mind it's just been a huge success."

Price's assessment is backed by many students, including Rachel Kniseley.

Kniseley, a junior majoring in psychology, says she has been hooked on the Think Center since she took a tour shortly after it opened last year. She recalls thinking the center was awesome.

Kniseley credits the Think Center with getting her study habits on track, leading to markedly different outcomes between her freshman and sophomore years. "My freshman year I'd be like, 'Oh, let me call Mom, because she's the only one who can help me with this,'" she says.

When the Think Center opened the following year, Kniseley discovered a place where she could study with some privacy when necessary but also connect with tu-





**RESPONDING TO OBSERVED NEEDS**

While the Think Center at Belhaven reflects a new concept in higher education student success programs, the CCCU's other campuses also work hard to provide just what students need to be successful, seeking to keep in step with changes in student needs over time.

For example, taking the lead to address an area of student need is exactly what Houghton College in Houghton, N.Y., had in mind when in 1989 it launched the Academic Support Center, now called the Center for Academic Success and Advising. The center was a response to a graduate intern's observation of the need for a staff person dedicated to helping students with physical and learning disabilities. Since then, CASA has continued to evolve as the needs of students have warranted.

In the 1990s it began assisting students for whom English was a second language and eventually offered tutoring to the entire campus for integrative studies (general education) courses and to any

student on academic guidance or probation or earning a D or an F.

In 2004 tutoring was offered regardless of grade standing, and in 2013 an Intensive Academic English Program was developed to assist students who are non-native English speakers. IAEP aims to improve reading and writing abilities to the level expected at Houghton. Participating students take classes in reading, writing, speaking, and listening instruction as well as biblical literature. A College Study Methods course is also available to all Houghton students through CASA.

"We desire that every Houghton student become academically successful and achieve their goals," says Mark Hunter, CASA's director. "Houghton College has high academic standards, and some students try to use their high school study methods in their Houghton classes and struggle with the academic demands."

In one capacity or another, during 2012-13, CASA supported the needs of nearly a quarter of Houghton's student population—22 percent—through tutoring,

counseling, guidance, or psychoeducational testing.

In addition to Hunter and two other full-time staff, CASA employs a half-time digital text coordinator, who prepares textbooks in a digital format for learning and physically disabled students. The initiative is part of CASA's larger goal to improve technology for visually impaired students.

"I believe the greatest difference between what we do at CASA as opposed to a similar program on a secular campus is an emphasis on relying on God's grace to guide and assist students through college," Hunter says. "Many of our conversations with students address how students are coping spiritually with the stress of college, and most meetings with students end in prayer for the student."

**ONE STUDENT AT A TIME**

Service is at the heart of Dordt College's Academic Skills Center, which is called ASK. Originally called The Writing Center, the center at the Sioux Center, Iowa, college opened during the 1979-80 aca-

ademic year and was promoted as a service available for all students, not only those needing remediation. Services expanded in 1982 to address the growing realization that students were increasingly underprepared in other areas, such as reading, math, and study skills, as they transitioned from high school. Peer tutoring has been part of ASK ever since.

"My tutors choose to work in this capacity for a variety of reasons," says Pam De Jong, director and department chair of ASK. "Most of them have a strong desire to serve. They regard their jobs as a way of serving their fellow students and building a stronger learning community."


De Jong says there have been hundreds of peer tutors throughout ASK's history. She says they are an important reason why the center has successfully helped ASK realize its vision to enable students to maximize

learning while equipping them with the necessary skills to function both within an academic community and as lifelong, independent learners.

In each of the past few years alone, more than 600 students—approximately 40 percent of Dordt's student body—have made more than 6,000 tutoring visits. Generally, half of the students accessing tutoring are freshmen, another quarter sophomores, and the remaining quarter juniors, seniors, or special enrollment students.

But De Jong says the impact is best seen on the individual level, beyond the numbers. She remembers one undecided student who eventually settled on majoring in elementary education. However, she had difficulty adjusting to the demands of college courses and professors. At the end of her first semester, she was still on academic probation but was allowed to continue under certain requirements. The student

eventually improved but needed a recommendation to be considered for acceptance into the teacher education program.

"I provided that needed recommendation because I saw in her the makings of a wonderfully creative and caring teacher," De Jong says. "Thankfully, she persevered. By the time she graduated she had a contract to teach, and I don't know who was most proud at commencement, the soon-to-be teacher, her parents, or me." 

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