At a time not too long ago, if a student needed to use a PC, he or she would need to come to one of the university’s student PC labs. There, the student would find rows of tables with PCs and monitors and fellow students sitting elbow-to-elbow, where each computer served a single student. Today, of course, the vast majority of students own one or more PCs, along with a smartphone and possibly a tablet device—all equipped with wireless data. But more than the devices students use has changed. Today, students often study in groups, where they learn together, or prepare group projects or class presentations. As for study space, power outlets, good wireless network access, and space to lay out their array of personal electronics is often the goal. And if there happens to be a coffee shop and professional staff assistance only a few steps away, all the better. Thus, the concept of “PC labs” is giving way to “social learning spaces.” This issue of the Information Technologies & Resources newsletter is devoted to this phenomenon, and highlights some of the newest social learning spaces created for our students.

“The creation of social learning spaces in various areas throughout the university is transforming our landscape and highlighting our emphasis on student learning and student success,” says Maribeth Ehasz, vice president for Student Development and Enrollment Services (SDES). “For several years, in discussions with students, I received regular feedback that they needed more spaces to study together on campus. Even students in online courses wanted to meet with each other face to face. With limited areas available to create new space, it became clear that transforming current spaces into social learning spaces might be the best way to meet students’ needs.”

“It is important for us to listen to students and to make every effort to meet their needs, especially when there is potential to positively impact their learning and success,” Ehasz continues. “We know that students will persist and complete their degrees at higher rates if they are engaged and connected to the university. Social learning spaces provide a way for students to connect with each other and enthusiastically be engaged in their learning and success. It’s a win-win for everyone.”

UCF’s state-of-the-art technology and innovatively designed social learning spaces allow students to maximize the benefit from their study time, whether it’s in the library’s new Knowledge Commons, the former Computer Center I and II that is now the Technology Commons, the Student Union or the All Knight Study. Read more about each of these spaces on the following pages.
Knowledge Commons

Located on the second floor of UCF’s main campus library, the Knowledge Commons is a dynamic space that brings together learning and technology, study and research, academic support, and print and online resources all in one place for students and faculty.

The space was designed to meet needs expressed by students and faculty members, and includes 196 computers (an increase of 102 from previous space), seating for 479 (an increase of 82 percent from previous space), ubiquitous power outlets, whiteboards, group and individual workstations, and comfortable, modern furniture. There is also a new reference desk, comfortable lounge seating areas and tablet armchairs that allow their occupants to work in natural light.

Since the Knowledge Commons opened in August 2010, transactions at the Research and Information Desk have increased 58 percent, research consultations have increased 38 percent and the main library gate count has gone up by 8 percent.

A variety of student activity can be observed in the commons. Students have become accustomed to the environment and come each day to “settle in.” When needed, they receive assistance from “mobile” librarians or librarians at the Reference and Information Desk, University Writing Center peer consultants and sometimes they text or chat with a librarian through the Ask-a-Librarian service from their seats.

Most interesting are the many groups of students studying collaboratively or brainstorming on projects and research. Sometimes groups gather laptops and whiteboards as they work together around one of the wall-mounted computer screens. Often, pairs or groups gather around a single rolling whiteboard, or two or three students may gather around a workstation, each using their own laptops or iPads. Because 40 iPads are available for checkout, they are spotted more frequently in the Knowledge Commons.

The new, updated feel to the library provides both quiet areas for individuals to study and great areas for teams to discuss and work together. —business major

Wall monitors and whiteboards are great for group projects, or when you need to look at a lot of resources at one time. —legal studies/criminal justice major

Ever since the remodel, the library has been an inspiring place, which pushed me to study. —engineering/computer science major

The library is my second home, and I love seeing it get better every year! —health sciences major

Great job to maintain library accessibility for student success... The remodeling of the second floor was a great investment in student education. —biomedical major
Learning at colleges and universities is being redefined by technology and is no longer confined to the classroom. UCF, recognizing the changes in student needs, developed the Technology Commons to provide students, faculty and staff with a resource center that fulfills their technological needs. A ribbon-cutting ceremony on Jan. 10 marked the official opening of the center.

As the outdated Computer Center I and II PC Labs became unsuitable for students to study and work effectively, the old space between the Student Union and library was transformed into an innovative hub that reaffirms UCF's dedication to bringing students the newest learning technology in an attractive, functional and supportive environment.

In addition to new computers and furnishings, the Technology Commons emphasizes social interaction and the importance of modern collaborative learning. As students’ learning styles evolve, many prefer to study in groups and exchange ideas. While there are still many individual study spaces available in the updated center, the new modular furniture is designed to be fluid and adapt to changing needs of the students and technology.

“Clearly, this is not the study space of your father—or mother. But UCF anticipates that the Technology Commons we celebrate today likely will be different in years to come,” President John C. Hitt said at the Technology Commons ribbon cutting. “That’s why this space is designed to adapt to emerging technologies and the changing needs of students.”

The expanded space of the Technology Commons houses 214 seats and more than 100 computers. It is divided into 10 different areas to provide students with an all-inclusive area that caters to all types of student needs:

- **The CORE**: A large open space in Computer Center II that is ideal for groups to meet before heading to different parts of the commons or for study breaks. Located within The CORE are recharge lockers, secure charging stations for laptops and other electronics, and a CPU service bar where students can have computer-related questions answered or drop off a laptop for repair. The CORE acronym stems from the facility’s attributes when it was in the planning stages: Collaborative Original Reflective Experimental.
- **Bring Your Own Technology (BYOT) Lab**: This wireless lounge features many different types of seating for students who bring their own laptops or check out one of the many netbooks available for loan.
- **Technology Product Center**: Students can view, test and purchase products from major brands affiliated with the UCF Computer Store. High-tech vending machines will be available where students can purchase office supplies or small technology items.
- **Café**: Snacks, refreshments and Seattle’s Best Coffee are available in the Café next to the BYOT Lab.
- **Collaboration Computer Lab**: Several study tables and rooms are available for students who are focusing on group work. The rooms feature glass walls that block outside noise and a flat-panel display that gives students a shared screen to rehearse presentations and hold discussions.
- **Video Recording and Editing Suite**: Available for students who wish to produce podcasts or video presentations.
- **Technology Service Center**: Provides computer repairs and services to UCF students, faculty and staff.
- **Technology Patio**: Outside study and work area with shaded tables and full wireless coverage between Computer Center I and II, with additional patio space and tables on the library side of CC II near the Café.
- **Computer Lab**: The lab features new Apple and Dell computers and additional workstations to guarantee students access to a computer at virtually any time. Students may use the computer lab for quick printing jobs or work that requires a longer stay. The Technology commons also offers wireless printing. Students can print to Tech Commons printers from anywhere on campus.
- **Training and Project Rooms**: These rooms are available to faculty and staff and are furnished with modular furniture that can be set up a variety of ways to accommodate meetings of different sizes.

(Story courtesy of UCF Today.)
At a school of almost 60,000 students, options for longer study hours are a necessity. And now, the student union and All Knight Study (see next story) have addressed that need.

In an initiative that began last fall, the student union is open 24 hours, five days a week, giving students another place to study, do group work or meet with friends. Services include a quiet study room, study space around the building, free printing at the Student Government Association (SGA) Express Print Lab and the ability to reserve conference rooms for group work.

During the extended hours, the Information Desk offers students free scantrons and bluebooks.

Some of the union’s restaurants, such as Subway and Joffrey’s Coffee, have, for the time being, agreed to stay open during the extended hours. Although, students hope more of the restaurants will keep their doors open during the late hours, too.

The union’s new hours are:
Sunday: 11 a.m. – midnight
Monday – Friday: all Knight and all day
Saturday 9 a.m. – midnight

Debating in February 2011, the All Knight Study facility near the Arena is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It encompasses 3,800 square feet of space that includes an open lounge study area, two group study rooms, a multipurpose room with TV and whiteboards, a quiet area, multiple outlets and even a microwave. Other services include free scantrons, free bluebooks, free printing, and free faxing and scanning.

The space was designed and built by the UCF Student Government Association (SGA) in partnership with the UCF Convocation Corporation. Construction was funded by the Capital Improvement Trust Fund and an allocation from the Activity & Service Fee Budget (SGA funds). Its annual operations are now supported by these same fees.

Former SGA president Mike Kilbride says the design concept was inspired by other social spaces, like an Apple store, coffee lounge and creative studio. It was built to address many campus needs, including the lack of study space at the north end of campus, as well as the lack of a safe, on-campus, 24-hour study space (because the library closes at 1 a.m.).

Within its first three months, more than 40,000 students passed through its doors to utilize the All Knight Study. Group study rooms are booked eight to 12 hours in advance, and the only real “slow” periods are between the hours of 7 a.m. and 10 a.m.

“We are really excited about this and hope more students take advantage of this great opportunity,” says current SGA vice president Adam Brock.

Whether students take advantage of the 24/7 All Knight Study or the 24/5 Student Union, they have many more new opportunities for studying (individually or in groups).

Thanks to the combined efforts of all of the departments involved, UCF is now on the forefront of providing our students with the modern, social study spaces.

All Knight Study, located off West Plaza Drive inside the UCF Arena, has areas for quiet and group study.

Student Union & All Knight Study

information technologies & resources websites

Center for Distributed Learning (CDL)  http://cdl.ucf.edu
Computer Services & Telecommunications (CS&T)  http://cst.ucf.edu
Information Technologies & Resources (IT&R)  http://itr.ucf.edu
Library  http://library.ucf.edu
Office of Instructional Resources (OIR)  http://www.oir.ucf.edu