



Kettering University

Breaking Down Barriers Between Learning and Living

specs

Education
Flint, MI
4 Floors
105,000 square feet

solutions provided

Space Planning
Finishes
Furnishings

strategic partners

Stantec
Steelcase
Rose Moving & Storage

Kettering University, a STEM-focused university in Flint, Michigan, prides itself on creating an open, collaborative learning environment for its students. When they had the opportunity to build a new Learning Commons, they naturally wanted those values reflected in the space. The result is a unique and inviting space that has become the “centerpiece of social and academic life on campus.”

Joe Asperger, the Director of Physical Plant at Kettering, says the space was “intended to be a culture-changer for the campus.” He explains, “The whole goal was to foster collaboration and bring people together. The building isn’t occupied by any one department. We wanted to break down barriers.”

The Learning Commons accomplishes this with a combination of stunning and innovative architecture and flexible, functional furnishings and fixtures that invite students to make the space their own. The building acts as a combined student union, library, collaborative learning space and community center for the campus. For furnishings and finishes, NBS partnered with Stantec designers to select quality products from more than 30 manufacturers to create a curated blended solution to reflect Kettering’s goals, budget and aesthetic.

The large space—105,000 square feet spread over four floors with an open atrium in the middle—incorporates both formal learning environments and informal, comfortable nooks where students can study individually or in groups or simply relax and socialize. There are very few walls, so different areas flow into each other to create



featured products

- Bernhardt Diego Lounge Chair
- Coalesse Lagunitas Lounge with Screens
- Emeco Alfi Stool
- Enwork Tables
- Hightower Gimbal Highback Lounge
- Viccarbe Aleta Seating



one unified space. Natural wood and pops of color throughout the building create a comfortable and engaging environment for students, faculty and staff.

For studying, small huddle spaces (d.spaces) are equipped with tables, whiteboards and technology for breakout groups and teamwork. The Learning Commons also boasts a 200-seat auditorium, a maker's space, and two "Knowledge Bars" where students can access the university's extensive digital library. Open areas feature a mix of soft lounge-style seating, tables and chairs and standing-height workspaces. Power hubs are accessible to charge mobile devices. The furniture selection empowers students to move things around to fit their diverse needs; coordinating fabrics and materials ensure the space has a unified appearance no matter where furnishings are moved.

The building also serves as a social space to relax and connect between classes and study sessions. The open lounge, situated between floors two and three, is a favorite hangout for students and faculty—including Kettering University President Dr. Robert K. McMahan. Two rooftop terraces and a patio create inviting spaces to meet and study in new ways, with outdoor furniture and even hammocks. Asperger says, "We wanted to create a space where students would be drawn to and want to stay to do group work, have lunch with a friend, attend a club meeting or study, instead of just retreating to their dorm rooms."

The new Kettering Learning Commons achieves that objective and will help attract and retain students. The building is a physical expression of Kettering's uniquely collaborative and fluid education model. All the spaces are being used—a testament to the attention paid to student and faculty needs and preferences when designing the space and selecting furnishings.

Asperger appreciates the expertise and support provided by the NBS team. "NBS has been an ongoing partner with the university for many years and always provided great customer service. They offered a diverse portfolio of product offerings, as well as their own abilities as a company. NBS brought a wealth of experience and knowledge."

Learn more about Kettering University: kettering.edu/ ➔

