

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Columbia College Chicago is currently undergoing an important transformation. Over its one hundred year history it has moved from a small commuter school to a nationally recognized arts and media college. With the adoption of the *Columbia 2010* strategic plan in 2004, Columbia became poised to challenge institutions with established reputations and considerably more resources. **To achieve its full potential, *Columbia 2010* contends that Columbia should do many things, but one of the most important changes is to transform its campus.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Today Columbia occupies twelve buildings of roughly 1.2 million square feet in Chicago's South Loop neighborhood. For the most part, the campus is barely visible, even though roughly 11,000 students move through the area on a daily basis – living, learning and experiencing this non-traditional urban campus. As envisioned in this plan, by 2010, Columbia's presence in the South Loop will be highly visible and its brand well recognized.

This plan is the product of a study that began in late 2004. It details the work itself, lists the findings of our research and offers detailed recommendations for achieving the goals outlined in the *Columbia 2010* strategic plan. Those goals describe a physical environment that is cohesive, possesses a sense of place and is made up of flexible and adaptable facilities.

RESEARCH PHASE

The planning team knew that it needed to form a complete understanding of the current campus before it could begin planning for the future. Research undertaken to develop that understanding included:

Stakeholder Interviews: The design team interviewed Trustees, administration, faculty, staff, student and alumni representatives, neighbors and community officials.

Campus Survey: Each of Columbia's twelve academic buildings was inventoried for physical condition and space allocation.

Benchmarking: Columbia's facilities were compared with competing and/or comparably sized arts and media institutions around the country.

Best Practices: Case studies of recently completed campus centers were prepared to shed light on the range of campus centers opening across the country.

Neighborhood Mapping: An inventory of the Columbia College Chicago neighborhood was prepared, documenting the existing infrastructure and character of the area.

Cognitive Mapping: Hundreds of Columbia College Chicago students participated in a survey that detailed their daily use of the campus and its facilities.

Brainstorming: Experts in South Loop real estate, campus planning, development and marketing spent a day discussing the future of Columbia and its plan for growth.

FINDINGS

The research and design activities yielded several key findings which form the heart of this report. Highlights of the findings follow.

Spatial Needs: Columbia provides significantly less academic and student services space per student than the institutions with which it competes. The shortfall affects teaching as well as non-teaching space. Overall, in order to meet the goals of *Columbia 2010*, the college needs an additional 427,000 net square feet of space.

Suitability of Facilities: Because of Columbia's long-standing commitment to renovating older buildings, many of its current facilities, because of their small structural grids, proximity to the El tracks and inadequate building systems, are not suited to the curriculum. The suitability issue is especially acute in the media arts, which require a large scale production facility.

Need for a Campus Center: The College's current lack of common space hinders its ability to offer an environment that supports collaboration. A Campus Center would provide a common ground for the Columbia community, facilitating interdisciplinary interaction. A centrally located Campus Center would also bridge the north and south nodes of campus activity, making the campus more connected.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This report offers several specific recommendations at the campus level and at the building level. It also recommends specific projects designed to address Columbia's identity in the South Loop.

Campus Recommendations:

Campus Zones: The campus should be planned to reflect two distinct zones of activity. An academic zone east of the El tracks between Roosevelt and Congress is recommended to consolidate and concentrate student activity and to help focus Columbia's identity on Wabash Avenue. A second residential zone should overlap the academic zone, but cover a larger area to allow for flexibility in acquiring residential facilities.

Campus Hubs: Four distinct campus hubs are recommended. These hubs – Administrative, Studio, Campus Center and Performance – will act as focal points within the larger campus, creating concentrations of activities.

Remote Facilities: The media production facilities, which require large column-free space, are probably not economically feasible in the academic zone. These should be located near public transit, where affordable property is available. There may be other facilities not yet identified that should also be located away from the South Loop campus.

Building Recommendations:

Campus Center: A campus center of approximately 225,000 net square feet is recommended for the centrally located College-owned site at 8th and Wabash. As envisioned, the Campus Center would contain a Student Center that would support a variety of activities designed to encourage interdisciplinary collaboration. It would also provide general classrooms and academic space, primarily for the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences but with some facilities for the School of Fine and Performing Arts as well.

Media Production Center: In order to maintain its leadership position in Media Arts instruction, Columbia needs a 36,000 net square foot production facility that can support its film, video, television, and interactive media programs. Such a facility requires column-free, high-ceilinged space not available or practical in the academic zone.

Performance Hub: A critical mass of performance venues, classrooms, workshops and rehearsal space should be developed in a single facility. At this time, the preferred site for this facility is on the College-owned property at 11th and Wabash. The Performance Hub is planned for a later phase of Columbia's development so other sites may be considered at that time. Such a facility, which will total approximately 166,000 net square feet, will encourage collaboration and interaction between different performing disciplines and will connect the performance-going public to Columbia.

COLUMBIA'S IDENTITY









In response to *Columbia 2010's* call to create a campus with "a distinct sense of place with a recognizable street presence," we propose two strategies:

A Network of Icons: Through the use of three elements – iconic architecture, arcons and super-graphics, Columbia would establish a strong presence in the South Loop. Such elements would create unity among the various buildings without obscuring the rich variety of architecture that characterizes the neighborhood. In so doing, they would strengthen Columbia's brand and signal to the community that Columbia is a hotbed of creative activity.

Sidewalk Art Installations and Creative Street

Furniture: By allowing Columbia's creative energy to spill onto the street in the form of storefront installations, public art and street furniture, the College will further project its identity to visitors, passersby and neighboring institutions.

ORIENTATION MAP

-  Columbia Campus Properties
-  CTA Green Line
-  CTA Orange Line
-  CTA Brown Line
-  CTA Purple Line
-  CTA Blue Line
-  CTA Red Line
-  Metra Lines

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ORIENTATION MAP

