

Harvard Graduate School of Design Case Study

Background

At the renowned Harvard School of Design, fostering creativity and innovation is paramount. To support this mission, Formaspace has installed high-quality, highly functional, and aesthetically pleasing workstations that cater to the needs of the school's large and dynamic student population. These workstations are more than just furniture; they are integral to the creative process, enhancing the inspiration and collaboration of students as they design and construct their projects within the light-filled, open studio environment of the GSD.

Problem

The GSD area furniture needed to meet specific design requirements while addressing challenges related to seasonal climate changes, which can cause screws to misalign, panels to warp, and cause desktops to be uneven over time. The Formaspace ID&E team also faced additional hurdles due to uneven floors in the 45+ year-old building, with height differences of up to an inch over a 6-foot span. Moreover, the discovery of a permanent fire safety fixture during installation added complexity to the project.

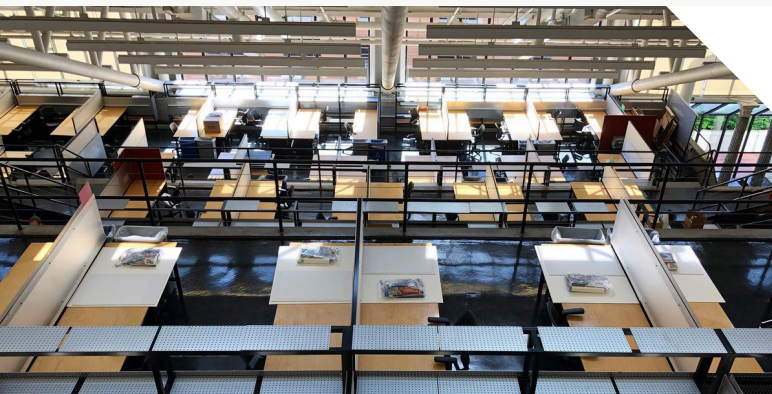
Solution

When Harvard GSD reached out to us based on a recommendation from Cornell GSD (where we were concurrently working on a similar project), we faced several unique challenges. To mitigate warping caused by temperature shifts, we mounted the acrylic panels loosely, allowing for expansion and contraction throughout the day. Despite the challenges, the white glove installation by the Formaspace engineering team was completed in just three weeks. We provided custom-built workstations featuring modular pegboards on central spines (designed with chalk trays and storage for students), divider panels, and mobile carts for each student's project area.

As with all our installations, we ensured product longevity by using fully welded connection joints, avoiding the corner-only fillet weld. Each component was designed with seasonal climate changes in mind, reinforced with standard features such as leveling feet to ensure uniformity across the workstations. At a time when sourcing Baltic birch plywood was difficult due to the Tsunami in Japan, we still managed to provide durable work surfaces with a u/v coating for lasting protection. Throughout the project, the Formaspace ID&E team implemented on-site product design modifications, resulting in a highly functional and aesthetically pleasing solution that continues to support Harvard GSD students as they complete the final year of their education.

Results

The Formaspace products transformed four levels of Gund Hall, an aging building with temperature fluctuations and uneven floors, into a highly functional and aesthetically pleasing workspace for students. Despite the challenges posed by the building's environment, we successfully built and installed approximately 450 workbenches and 160 central spines, anchoring modular pegboards and incorporating storage solutions. The workstations featured Baltic birch plywood surfaces with a UV coating and reinforced divider panels with a P90 satin finish to allow natural light to pass through while maintaining student privacy. Secure mobile carts provided storage and versatile, removable tabletops for model building, while durable chalk trays offered convenient tool organization. This project was completed in 2011, and the workstations are still in use today, remaining in excellent condition—a testament to the quality and durability of Formaspace solutions.



Project Details:

Project Size:
More than 450 products that included work desks, divider panels and custom, secure storage carts

Project Manager:
Aaron Stoneburner,
Formaspace Director
of Design &
Engineering

Product:
Custom casework
with similarities to
the Formaspace
Basix product line

End User:
The Harvard
Graduate School
of Design (GSD)

Scope:
Full installation
completed
within 3 weeks