

Teaching and Learning in the Humanities and Social Studies Committee:
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Report: Recommendations for Improvements to ARH and Carnegie

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PRELIMINARY REMARKS

The core of a liberal arts education is people: the enhancement of the potential of our students and the cultivation of their ability to take their place as citizens of their nations and the world. The Humanities and Social Studies Divisions, committed as they are to the study of human beings and societies in all of their rich diversity, play a most important role in the goal of helping our students draw on their studies at Grinnell to make themselves citizens and socially-responsible, ethical decision-makers. Producing the greatest number of majors in the college, supporting a wide range of exciting and path-breaking concentrations, and providing a number of heavily-subscribed service courses, the Humanities and Social Studies faculty are housed and teach in the most dilapidated and dysfunctional teaching buildings on campus.

The Teaching and Learning in the Humanities and Social Studies Committee met on a biweekly basis over the course of the Spring semester 2001. We considered a range of information regarding ARH and Carnegie, their use, and present and future space needs. We perused departmental statements regarding their pedagogical goals and strategies, their use of technology, and the implications of these on needs for room configurations, furniture, and classroom sizes. We considered departmental needs for office space and its location, and for meeting spaces and research areas. We studied building plans, rates of room use, and course enrollments. On several occasions we visited classrooms and other spaces in ARH and Carnegie. We even listened to ventilation systems. We spoke with office staff. We consulted with the Dean of the College, the Registrar, the Director of Security, and representatives from Facilities Management.

What emerged from our investigations was the clear and unmistakable fact that there is a desperate need for more space than these two buildings can possibly provide. Most troubling were the inability to increase the number of classrooms with a capacity of 25-30, the inability to make any improvements to the most problematic rooms (the language seminar rooms), the inability to bring certain departments' faculty within sufficient proximity to each other, and the inability to house programs and services (International Studies, the Social Studies IMTS) near the departments that they serve or on which they rely. More ambitious goals, such as student and faculty "lab" space—ever more necessary as Grinnell College increases its commitment to student research and faculty as teacher-scholars—simply had to be set aside.

If we are to realize our goals in teaching and research, achieve optimal synergies in teaching and faculty interaction, and if our programs and departments are to run as they should, the Humanities and Social Studies faculty need more space and different kinds of space than is currently available in ARH and Carnegie. **For these reasons, the Teaching and Learning Committee strongly recommends that either a major expansion of the ARH/Carnegie complex or the construction of a new building take place as soon as possible.**

As may become clear in the following recommendations for immediate improvements, the Committee found itself playing a zero-sum game in its consideration of classroom improvements and allocation of space: Should a department continue to be crippled in its ability to mentor new faculty and advise its students in order to gain sufficient classroom space of a certain size? Should we limit professors in their pedagogies and use of technology if the furniture needed to facilitate these decreases room capacities? How can we support exciting new programmatic initiatives like International Studies when there is no room for the necessary combination of clustered office, meeting, and classroom space? Could we recommend combining small classrooms to make more larger, functional rooms if doing so diminishes the number of classrooms available for tutorials? In most cases, this last question is a moot point: load-bearing walls create many of our most limiting rooms.

With this caveat—that little can be done to significantly improve ARH and Carnegie as they are presently configured—the Teaching and Committee is pleased to present you with a vision statement for the Humanities and Social Studies, recommendations for immediate improvements to these two buildings, and guidelines for future discussions of space for the two divisions.

PRINCIPLES INFORMING THE COMMITTEE'S DECISIONS

Office Allocation and Equipment

1. Departments located in ARH and Carnegie should have all members of their faculty housed in offices in these two buildings.

Much departmental work, mentoring of junior faculty, and information sharing takes place in casual face-to-face encounters facilitated by office proximity

A specific recommendation is that the Department of English faculty be regrouped, that members of the department (temporary and tenured or tenure-track) be housed within ARH and Carnegie, and that extreme dispersal throughout the two-building complex be lessened.

2. The International Studies Program should be housed near those faculty most engaged in teaching courses relevant to this program, namely, those in the Humanities and Social Studies, in order to maximize synergies of faculty, student, and visitor interaction.

3. The Social Studies IMTS should be located in ARH or Carnegie. There are at present two possibilities. ARH 401 is on the small side but better than a location elsewhere. Much better would be ARH 323 (the French seminar room would be moved to and expanded 322- see recommendations below), which could house the IMTS as well as equipment and workspace.

4. ARH and Carnegie Secretaries need a lounge: can the present custodial lounge (titled a closet) be used as a lounge for all staff in these two buildings? The tiny room in the Carnegie basement (which is now the official staff lounge) could be used for storage (perhaps for custodial supplies).

Classrooms

1. Teaching and Learning Co. agrees with the Instructional Support Committee in thinking that a goal of 80% use rates in classrooms would create scheduling difficulties and ignores the other (non-class) uses of these rooms.

2. "Don't mess with success." The Committee recommends that no major structural changes be made to those classrooms that have occupancy rates above 80%. A similar principle leads it to recommend that successful programs such as the Writing Lab retain their location.

3. The Committee notes that it has several seminar rooms that are too small for most classes. The tables in these rooms limit capacity to 10 (table leg placement poses a problem). These narrow rooms have plenty of backboard space, but it is not usable if the room is full to capacity. The students' backs are toward one or the other board.

4. The Committee recognizes the need for at least two more rooms with capacities of 15-20 and two more rooms with capacities of 25-30 furnished with discussion tables.

The committee has found it all but impossible to make changes allowing for two more rooms of 26 with appropriate seating (with tables) without overcrowding.

5. The Committee recommends that official room capacity numbers be revised downward and that excess chairs be removed from rooms.

Room	True Cap.	Cap with Table
ARH 120	30 - 35	
ARH 130	20-24	
ARH 131	35	
ARH 102	70	
ARH 223	13	
ARH 227	13	

ARH 229	13	
ARH 401	8	
ARH 305	29	
ARH 312	13	
ARH 314	25-30	
ARH 317	13	
ARH 318	22	
ARH 323	13	
ARH 324	30	15-20
ARH 325	30	15-20
Carn 304	15	15
Carn 310	15	
Carn 313	14	20
Carn 314	22	

6. The Committee recommends a variety of seating types to suit pedagogical purposes. While many faculty prefer tables that can be moved and combined in a variety of ways, a few object that such furniture will require rearrangement before every class.

In the largest of classrooms (ARH 120 and 131) the use of tables is not feasible and the Committee did not feel that it could decrease their seating capacities.

Introductory language courses also call for side-arm chairs instead of tables in a few of these classrooms.

7. The committee notes that, in every classroom, the large boxes with computer and video equipment serve as obstacles in the classroom. Wherever possible, these should be replaced by ceiling mounted projectors (please see recommendations in Part II for prioritizing such replacement).

8. The Committee finds most department-owned rooms to have a pleasant and distinctive appearance.

9. The Committee recommends that discussion tables be placed (or retained) in the following rooms: Carnegie 310, 304, 313, and 314, and ARH 130 and 322.

10. The committee recognizes that faculty housed in ARH and Carnegie cannot expect to teach all classes in these two buildings. No department should be exempt from this need to schedule outside of ARH-Carnegie, since just about all use maps, slides, and other teaching aids and face the same difficulties of moving these things around (though some classes--Statistics comes to mind!-- should be exempt).

11. The three large PDR rooms in the Forum be used as tutorial classrooms, since Tom Crady has agreed to this. These rooms should be equipped with black or whiteboards.

Use of the PDRs should be taken into account should the Committee (or its successor) recommend the reallocation of a seminar classroom in ARH to other uses.

12. The Committee recommends that, when submitting course schedules, department chairs supply the Registrar with a list of classroom attributes (furniture types, technology) needed for each course. This list would supplement faculty requests for particular rooms.

13. The Committee recommends that the Registrar distribute plans of classrooms with a clear statement regarding the upper limits of classrooms.

A campus-wide discussion of the advisability of teaching classes larger than 25-30 in an institution that emphasizes the importance of a low faculty-student ratio should be initiated.

PART I: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMMEDIATE IMPROVEMENTS TO CARNEGIE

CARNEGIE: OBSERVATIONS

Faculty members note the lack of character of the Carnegie classrooms. As one faculty member, not a member of the committee, remarked, Carnegie has all the character and warmth of a Holiday Inn. The most recent improvements to Carnegie's overall appearance was done on the cheap and this shows.

Carnegie 304 & 310

1. These rooms have good space and great light. True capacities are probably about 15 seats.
2. The carpet and the walls look dingy and drab.
3. The video carts look junky and get in the way.
4. Tables are unattractive.
5. Blackboards on the north wall of 304 and the south wall of 310 are in bad condition and hard to write on.

Carnegie 314

1. The committee responded favorably to the present arrangement of moveable rectangular tables in a square shape that accommodates 18-20 people.
2. Most of the black board space is on the south wall, which is largely inaccessible if the room is full because of limited space between seats and wall.
3. This room is unattractive, the bulletin board with various advertisement flyers is unattractive, and the room has no character.
4. One committee member complained of glare in this room.

Carnegie 313

While this room has many problems, it is the only classroom in Carnegie with some character. The committee is reluctant to undermine its distinctive character (see recommendations 7-8 below). Ventilation is noisy and on-off controls must not be removed until new noise reduction measures have been experienced in the classroom.

CARNEGIE CLASSROOMS: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMMEDIATE IMPROVEMENTS

Summer 2001: Carnegie 313 and 314

CARNEGIE 313

The Registrar and Facilities Management initially proposed tables and seating for 24. After further discussion, both parties agreed with the representative of the Teaching and Learning Co. that 24 would overcrowd this room. Tables, seats, and capacities have been scaled back to 20 (though #1 & #2 below can deliver seating for up to 22).

1. Replace the long library table with six moveable tables like those in Fine Arts, with roughly the proportions of the tables in Carnegie 314. The Committee encourages the dean to commit sufficient resources for attractive tables with wooden legs (the Registrar and Facilities Management have proposed tables with metal legs).
2. Replace existing chairs with 20 to 22 suitable chairs.
3. Place the Windsor chairs presently in 313, which have historical value, in Carnegie offices.
4. Replace blackboard on west wall with one that extends the full length of the wall.
5. Remove the cabinet on the west wall so that the entire length of the west wall is useable teaching/board space.
6. Paint closet in a color that is more appealing and less distracting.

7. Paint south wall ventilation units in an unobtrusive color.
8. Remove furniture in the northeast corner.
9. Remove coat hooks on east wall.
10. Reduce ventilation noise. ****Retain on-off switch.***

CARNEGIE 314

The Registrar and Facilities Management initially proposed tables and seating for 24. After further discussion, both parties agreed with the representative of the Teaching and Learning Co. that 24 would overcrowd this room. Tables, seats, and capacities have been scaled back to 20 (though #5 can deliver seating for up to 22).

1. Replace current green board on east wall with a blackboard that spans the entire wall.
2. Place a blackboard on the west wall.
3. Replace the present ugly chairs with something more attractive and comfortable.
4. Ideally, replace tables with something more like the tables in Fine Arts classrooms, but with dimensions much like the present tables.

Summer 2001: Carnegie 304 and 310

While these recommendations fall under maintenance rather than improvements, they are linked to the work recommended for Carnegie 330 and 314.

CARNEGIE 304 & 310

1. Replace the pitted blackboard on the north wall of 304, with a longer blackboard that runs the entire length of the wall. *Rick Whitney proposes to move the board now in 313 to 304.*
2. Replace the blackboard in 310 on the south wall, which is showing wear and tear, with a longer blackboard that runs the entire length of the wall.

PART II: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO CARNEGIE AND ARH IN THE NEAR FUTURE

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRIORITIZING FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS AND SETTING FUTURE GOALS

While none of the changes proposed in this document call for major structural changes, taken as a whole, they are costly. Perhaps the recommendation that involves the most expense is that which proposes the replacement of bulky boxes housing electronics in the ARH classrooms with ceiling-mounted projectors. The Teaching and Learning Committee recognizes the College's need to budget for these changes, perhaps over a number of years. Below, the Committee makes some suggestions for prioritizing its recommendations. It also makes the following suggestions regarding priorities.

1. In considering the devotion of funds to any project in ARH and Carnegie, the expense must be considered in light of the educational mission of the College.
2. The most persistent complaints are noisy ventilation, inflexible or otherwise inappropriate seating for discussion classes, over-crowding and a surfeit of chairs, inadequacy of board space, unusable space and poor classroom focus caused by angled walls. Remedying these problems should take priority.

3. A plan for the use of ARH and Carnegie in the long-term can help determine where improvements (and what improvements) should be made. The Committee strongly encourages the Dean to establish a permanent building uses committee that considers all of the teaching and faculty office buildings on campus and develops a long-range plan for improvements, expansions and reallocations of space, and that has a voice on any building planning committee (e.g. Science Phase 2). This is particularly important when considering the College's need for rooms of a certain size (seating 25-30), which should take precedence over particular departmental or divisional desires for classroom spaces available elsewhere on campus.

CARNEGIE PRIORITY 1 AND 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Priority 1: Carnegie 313 and 314

CARNEGIE 313

1. Place a blackboard on the north wall (the Committee prefers blackboards to white boards). Ideally, the light switch and thermostat could be moved closer together so that they don't take up so much space on the north wall.
2. Re-establish and reinforce the proprietary character of this Political Science "owned" room by re-hanging the old pictures on the wall, and
3. building a display cabinet for part of the south wall for the Political Science department.
4. Install a ceiling-mounted projector.

CARNEGIE 314

1. Personalize this room by designating it a "proprietary room." While the committee has mixed feelings about proprietary rooms to the extent that departmental claims may hinder maximal use of such rooms, the committee has been favorably impressed with the personalized quality of the proprietary language seminar rooms.
2. If this room becomes a proprietary room (Economics, Sociology, and History would be candidates for such a room), then mount a narrow glass case on the north wall where the department in question could place displays of faculty and student work, etc.

Priority 2: Carnegie 304 and 310

CARNEGIE 304

1. Clean carpet and repaint.
2. Replace tables with a curved oval seminar-type table that seats 16 (class of 15 plus professor).
3. Replace chairs with more attractive and comfortable chairs.

CARNEGIE 310

1. Clean carpet and repaint.
2. Replace tables with smaller modular tables that allow for something other than a vision-obstructing rectangular shape, or a one-piece oval.
3. Replace chairs with more attractive and comfortable chairs.

Priority 2: Bathrooms on Carnegie Second and Fourth Floors

Improve ventilation for these bathrooms, which are located no more than three steps from a faculty office.

ALUMNI RECITATION HALL: OBSERVATIONS

ARH has an abundance of small seminar rooms that seat too few people (10-12 total), are poorly configured, with blackboard space virtually unusable (due to the narrowness of the rooms and the fact that students have their backs to the boards). There is little that can be done to improve this situation given the need for rooms for tutorials and language seminars (despite the fact that these rooms are inadequate for the task), and the structural limitations posed by ARH.

Rooms in ARH are plagued with high noise levels caused by the ventilation system. While certain rooms are particularly problematic, this is a widespread problem. It poses special problems for courses in foreign languages and historical linguistics, where students and faculty need to hear the fine points of pronunciation.

The large boxes with computer and video equipment are obtrusive, can displace the focus of the room, and often block blackboard space.

Judging by its use rates, ARH 318 is a successful room, but most faculty who use it complain about the dimensions of the seminar table. The table separates students too far, making it difficult for them to hear each other in this noisy room and eroding the intimacy that a seminar table is supposed to impart.

Priority 1: ARH 120 & 131

1. Removal of additional chairs. Maximum of 35 in the room.
2. Install a ceiling-mounted projector in either ARH 120 or 131.

Priority 1: ARH 131 & 130

1. Straighten wall between 131 and 130, bringing the east end of the wall further north (giving as much space to 130 as possible).
2. Install door access to 131 and 130.
3. Replace present tablet armchairs in ARH 130 with tables: true capacity (if #1 is done) with tables would be about 20, perhaps 22.

Priority 1: ARH 318 & 322

1. Straighten wall between 318 and 322. Exact location of wall should be determined by 318's present capacity, which should remain at 22 with a (preferably oval) seminar table.
The Committee recommends that architects consider taking four feet from the widest point of each room and add four feet to the narrowest points in each room. ***We reiterate that this successful room must not lose seating capacity.***
2. Replace chairs with tables that suit the configuration of 322.
3. Install an overhead projector in ARH 318 (although this could be made a priority 2 change).
4. Replace the present seminar table in 318 with one that does not separate students so widely (see observations above).
5. If the wall cannot be moved in a way that expands the size of 322 while maintaining the capacity of 318, then
 - a. remove excess side arms in 322, and
 - b. explore the possibility of five rectangular tables arranged in a u-shape facing the north blackboard, for a capacity of 15 for 322.

Priority 2: ARH Seminar Rooms

All language seminar rooms in ARH need narrower tables. The present modular seminar tables have legs that make it difficult to seat more than about 10 people. All of these seminar rooms should have their capacities set at a maximum of 13.

Priority 2: ARH 120 & 131

Replace present side-arms with side-arms that have a larger (fairly flat) tablet surface sufficient to hold books, binders, or laptops.

Priority 2: ARH Stair Wells

Add handrails to both sides of ARH stairwells.

Priority 2: ARH Bathrooms

1. Bathrooms need better ventilation and more privacy.
2. Bathroom walls adjoining faculty offices should be sound-insulated.
3. Can some of these bathrooms be converted to single use bathrooms?

Priority 3: Carnegie and ARH Classrooms

Replace ventilation systems.

Priority 3: ARH and Carnegie Classrooms

The committee recommends that, in every classroom, the large boxes and carts with computer and video equipment be replaced by ceiling mounted projectors. The boxes are most obstructive in the smaller rooms, but cost per student consideration probably demands that larger and more heavily-used rooms be equipped first.

1. As PRIORITY 1, place ceiling-mounted projectors in ARH 130 or 121 and Carnegie 313.
2. As PRIORITY 2, place ceiling mounted projectors in ARH 318, ARH 130 (or 121), Carnegie 314.

Priority 3: ARH Foreign Language and Other Faculty Offices

Foreign language offices in ARH should be "smart rooms" capable of receiving satellite broadcasts and equipped with video-tape equipment. Faculty of other disciplines that could take advantage of this technology should have similarly-equipped offices.

Priority 3: ARH 124

This room, despite recent improvements, continues to be a difficult room to teach in. Lines of sight are blocked by computers and the noise level is too high for communication.

1. Can computer monitors be mounted into the tables? Alex notes that this requires wider tables and decreases the professor's ability to move about the room.
2. Can the existing computer monitors be folded down? Or could tap tops with large monitors be permanently installed in the tables (so that students could close them and see the professor)?

Priority 4: Carnegie

Replace carpet with something more aesthetically pleasing.