

# San Jose State University

EDUCATION/LIBRARY;  
SAN JOSÉ, CALIFORNIA

**Topic:**

*Collaboration  
Technology*

**Application:**

*Formal Learning  
Informal Learning  
Internet/Electronic Access  
Library*

**Project Scope:**

*30 workstations; classrooms;  
10,000 square feet*

**Herman Miller Product:**

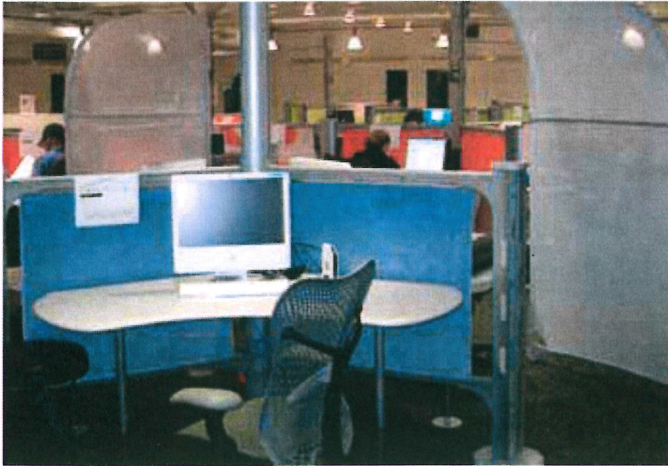
*Resolve® System  
Caper® Chairs  
Mirra® Chairs*

**Year Completed:**

*2006*



In search of attractive, comfortable workstations for its Academic Success Center, San José State University incorporated pods of Resolve workstations in bright colors for its glass-enclosed "stage" area. Mirra and Caper chairs provide comfort in the center and classrooms.



As the university that "powers Silicon Valley," San José State University takes seriously its mission to educate students. Therefore, its Academic Success Center (ASC) lies not only at the geographic heart of the 155-acre campus, but also at the ideological core of its Vision 2010 initiative to enhance academic quality and to enrich the student experience.

The ASC is a hub for student services such as advising, peer mentoring, and a library "outpost." Equipped with the most advanced technology for students that the university has to offer, the ASC is a one-stop shop where students can access both the services and the technology they need to succeed academically. Located in a signature building on campus designed by the architectural firm Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, LLP, every detail within the ASC was carefully planned, and that planning was guided by current pedagogical research as well as by surveys of students and faculty.

Yet, in addition to being a place for serious work, it's also meant to be comfortable and attractive—a "sticky" place where students want to hang out and where they can work in comfort. Visually, the space is dominated by a glass-enclosed "stage," where people can see and be seen, according to Mary Jo Gorney-Moreno, associate vice president for Academic Technology. "The space was designed to be appealing, so passersby will feel welcome to come in and work."

Within the glass enclosure, pods of Resolve workstations with boundary screens in bright orange, blue, and green create a dynamic, inviting ambience. The Resolve pods and restaurant-like booths also encourage collaboration. "Employers tell us that they want students to know how to find information and how to work together," says Dr. Gorney-Moreno.

In her view, the Resolve workstations with their embracing boomerang-shaped work surfaces and rolling screens that "create a sense of geographic enclosure" encourage students to work together. The latest computer gadgetry gives students the tools to work effectively, and Mirra chairs allow them to work comfortably. "If a student is doing a five-hour digital editing project, he or she needs to be comfortable. The Mirra chair is very comfortable," says Dr. Gorney-Moreno.

A donation from Plantronics, a local company, provided SJSU with about half the Resolve workstations it needed for the stage area, and Bobbie Paul, senior designer, Western Contract Interiors, integrated the donated parts with new product the university purchased.



In addition to the stage, the ASC consists of incubator classrooms and conference rooms, as well as offices for the various services and peer mentors. Within the classrooms, lightweight, stackable Caper chairs add a splash of color and instant mobility to a classroom. They also make the classroom more accessible for students with disabilities. Chairs without arms assist those needing bariatric support; chairs without wheels allow easier transfer for students in wheelchairs; height-adjustable chairs provide ergonomic support for students with back problems.


Yet, they all look the same. "We're able to meet the needs of people with disabilities, without making them look different," says Dr. Gorney-Moreno. "Caper solved that problem for us."

The incubator classroom is also equipped with SMARTBoards and videoconferencing equipment that facilitates interaction within the classroom and enables connection outside it. One class that has used those features extensively is Professor John McClusky's Advanced Studio class in Industrial Design.

Since his students were developing office products based on research conducted for Herman Miller by Chuck Darrah, a San José State anthropology professor, the class tapped another Herman Miller resource—its people.

Several times during the semester, students submitted their work to Herman Miller design researchers for review and comment. Then, as a capstone project, the professionals and the students gathered for a final critique of the students' work during a live, two-hour videoconference. "When our connection cut off after two hours, our technician frantically started calling for a teleconference line, and we continued to teleconference for another hour," says Professor McClusky.

Not only did the students gain experience in participating in a real-world conference with the pros, they were also exposed to the art of communicating with a remote client. And, besides having designed the chairs the students were sitting in, Herman Miller was able to share in SJSU's mandate to mold the next generation of engineers and designers.

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