

# Establishing a Wellness Space for Students: A Work in Progress

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## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Staff at Odegaard Undergraduate Library (OUGL) proposed repurposing an underutilized room in disrepair in order to provide students with a dedicated wellness space. OUGL is a centrally located building with some of the longest open hours on campus and is only open to the UW community. The Wellness Room would extend our department's long-standing commitment to student wellness, demonstrated by such wide-ranging efforts as wellness related events, a wellness technology collection, and partnerships with other departments to offer counseling events in the building.



CARPET FROM THE 70S, AND A FURNITURE GRAVEYARD



### INITIAL GOALS

Maintain learning environments conducive to studying and working collaboratively by creating spaces that support students' health and mental well-being.

Design spaces that support student autonomy and agency; allow students to be inspired to care for themselves through intentional space design and amenities.

Address changing and emerging student needs with intentional usage of enclosed spaces within the library currently being used for general study.

Uphold our department's value of student-centeredness and the Libraries' value of user-centeredness by ensuring that students are involved in every stage of the process.

Center the needs of under-served students such as students with disabilities, neurodiverse students, and commuter students in new space designs.

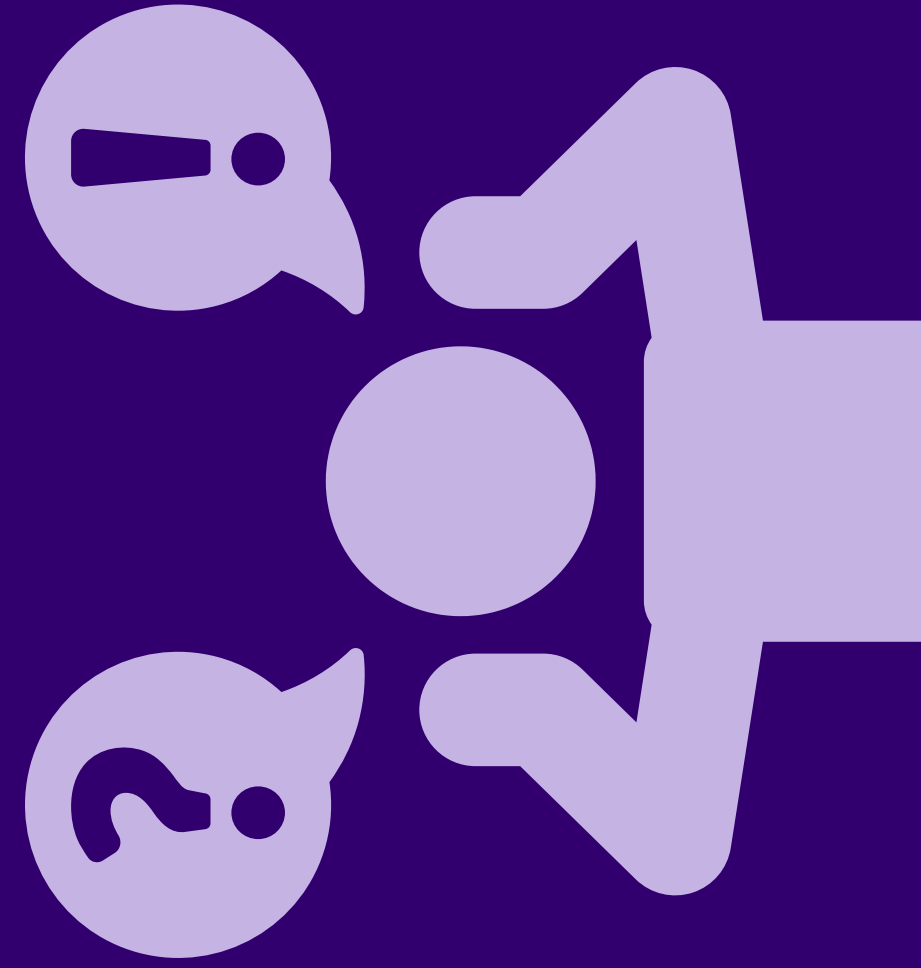
## IDENTIFYING STAKEHOLDERS AND FINDING FUNDING

Finding funding was a multi-step process, starting with identifying potential funding sources within the UW Libraries and identifying our main stakeholders. We approached the development of our funding proposal by referring to the Libraries values and strategic plan:

- Enhance the Student Experience' by focusing on inclusion and advocating for student needs
- Align our services and programs with the needs of our student
- Create shared ownership of library spaces with and for students.

We were able to secure buy-in from our department Director, UW Libraries Facilities, Assessment and Advancement.

Stage one of the redesign was to secure funding to replace the carpet, repaint the walls, and secure design services via a UW vendor.



## START! SURVEYING THE WELLNESS LANDSCAPE

The Wellness Room Planning team took several in-person field trips to other wellness spaces across campus. We were particularly interested in:

- Layouts (privacy, leg room, arrangement of furniture)
- Furniture (did they go for easy to clean or comfortable?)
- Capacity (how many students could utilize the space at once?)
- Policies (what policies did the other spaces have? how were they presented?)
- Unidentified needs (are there aspects to wellness rooms that we hadn't even considered?)



## THE ROAD SO FAR

### FINDING HARMONY BETWEEN FORM AND FUNCTION

Designers from One Workplace took our initial rough designs and list of priorities and provided a series of mockups of furniture and potential layouts.

The **two biggest competing priorities** were:

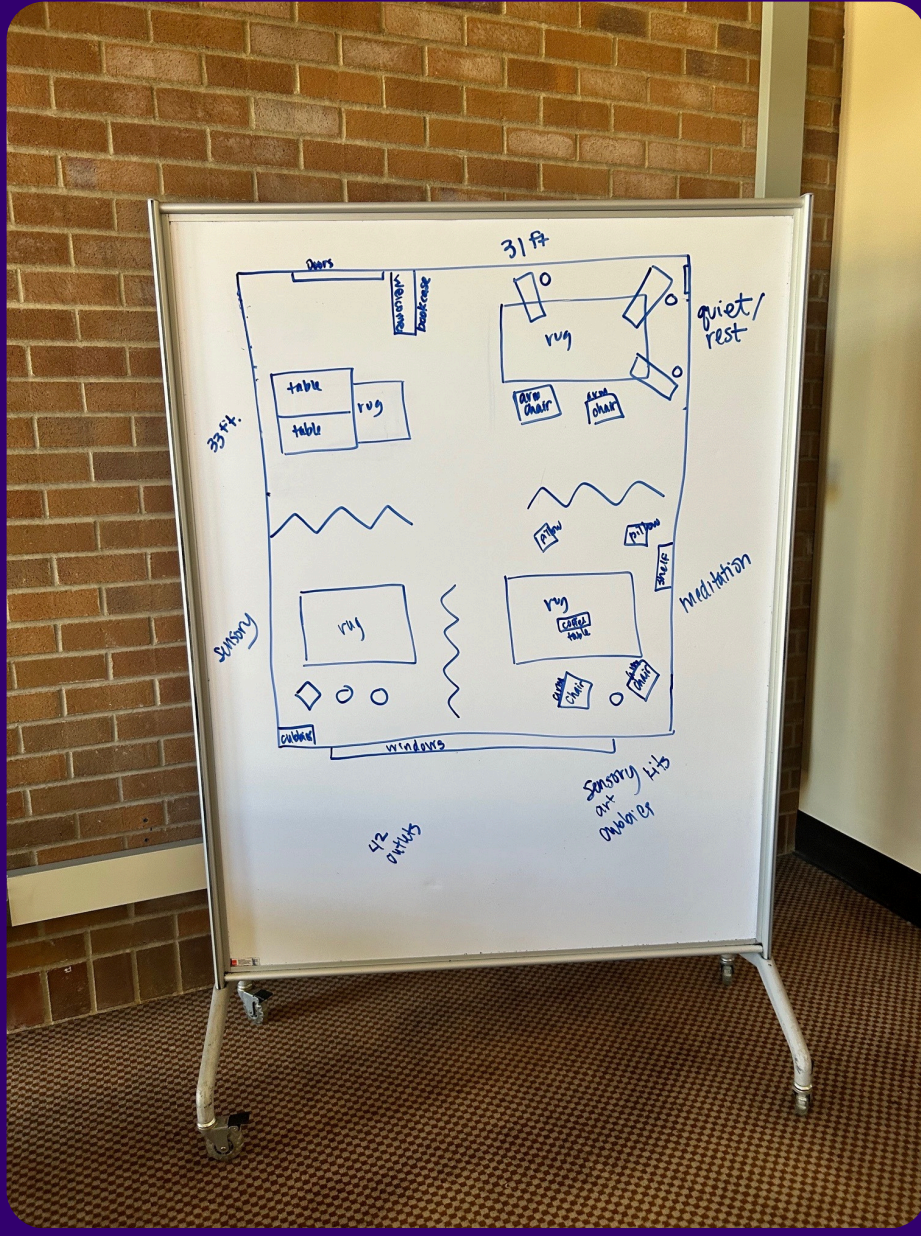
- Comfort vs Maintainability: Is furniture comfortable? Is it easy to clean? Can it hold up to heavy use?
- Privacy vs Security: Will students feel like they have enough privacy to relax? Will we have enough visibility around the space that it could still remain a safe place?



### ENVISIONING THE SPACE

From the initial information gathering trips and beginning conversations with students, we settled on the following four categories of activities for a space focused on student wellness:

- Creativity
- Sensory
- Rest
- Meditation



## DATA DRIVEN

### decisions

From the very beginning of the project, we knew that we wanted the space to be not just for students, but designed based on student feedback. We want students to feel empowered in the creation of the space, and to feel a sense of ownership while using it.

### STUDENT FEEDBACK ON ROOM NAME & ACTIVITIES

This was part of the "Envisioning the Space" stage. UW Libraries student employees were asked to describing the types of activities that could happen in rooms titled: wellness/wellbeing, rejuvenation, and reflection. Using the information from these sessions, we were able to settle on a suitable label for the space, as well as creating a list of hoped for activities and zones for our initial meeting with the designers.

### FORMAL ASSESSMENTS WITH DEMO FURNITURE



Working with Libraries Assessment, we conducted several assessment sessions with individual students, using demo furniture and the activities and items from our wellness kits.

Tests conducted included:

- Sound:** Would someone actively utilizing the furniture in the sensory area be distracting to the students in the quieter areas of the room?
- Comfort and Privacy:** Did students feel safe to use the room to support their chosen wellness activities?
- Intuitiveness:** What did students naturally drift towards when given very broad or no instructions?



### KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM ASSESSMENT

- Students **strongly preferred** areas near the window.
- The separate activity zones were **not intuitive** and **sensory furniture did not need to be in its own zone**.
- Students **wanted simple**, size inclusive, movable furniture that provides some privacy (like high back and arms).
- Students raised questions about room **accessibility**, guidelines and the availability of wellness support items while using the room.
- Students want an **ascetically pleasing** space with natural light, art and plants.

### RECONNECTING WITH THE DESIGNERS

The assessment results were summarized and shared with the designers, along with thoughts on breaking out the space into larger but fewer quadrants. **The finalized layout now includes:**

- a large greeting area for guidelines, storage and resources
- a multi-use rest and meditation area
- a community creativity and art area

### NEXT STEPS

- Choosing the final furniture items.
- Creating a Wellness Room book collection.
- Refining room guidelines.
- Opening up the space for student use!
- Conducting additional assessment if needed.

