



Redesigning Room Namm 601-B

An information Architecture Solution that strives to create a learning experience for Professional and Technical Writing students.

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Creating Place in Namm 601-B

Proposal for Information Architecture Final Project

Creating a Sense of Place

For this project, I am proposing the concept of re-designing Namm room 601-B. The room is usually used for Professional and Technical Writing (PTW) students at The New York City College of Technology (City Tech) but it not designed with these students, their work, or their educational needs in mind. By creating a visualization of the room, I will be able to highlight ways that optimizes the space for students. By defining the space as a flowing, interactive, immersive, and truly participatory environment, I will be able to create a clearer sense of context of the room. I will accomplish this through a floor plan or schematic visualization of the room. This visualization will enable me to create a narrative, better understand the users of the room, clarify content, and distinguish the necessary context of the room.

Understanding “Place” in Context of Information Architecture.

Information architecture is not a term that can be easily understood single concept. It has multiple entry points when it comes to being defined however according to Louis Rosenfeld, Peter Morville, and Jorge Arango authors of *Information Architecture for the Web and Beyond*, “when designing information architecture, we are engaging in a new type of placemaking: one that alters how we perceive and understand information” (pg.54). The creation of a system within a place changes how we see and understand the content of a space. In the physical world, architecture of buildings dictates their system or creates a sense of context and content.

With a well-developed sense of place users are able to conceptualize information based on their own narratives and experiences. Namm 601-B is a room is a room

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Understanding “Place” in Context of Information Architecture Continued.

designated to most classes for City Tech’s PTW major. However, the room as it stands does not have a sense of place that can be conceptualized as a working space for PTW students. The walls are bland; the layout does not flow, relate, or contributes to the experience of the students or professors. The system within Namm 601-B limits interactions, creativity, and the flow of information as it comes to both students and the professors.

As place making in information architecture changes how in this case students and professors perceive information 601-B needs to be changed into a space that allows students to grasp bits of information given by the professor and produce content which showcases their learned knowledge. I believe that the design of space in 601-B limits this, it does not have a targeted system which addresses the discourse community of now just the PTW major and students but of City Tech itself and with this project I hope to change that by bringing showing how a new design of space 601-B can create a learning experience that will not hinder students but contributes to the development of community, character, and interpersonal relationships.



Figure 1. N 601-B Room Sign

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My Experience in Naam 601-B



Figure 2. View of N 601-B from conference area

I have spent many hours in this place and it has become a space in which I have become accustomed to and particularly familiar with. However, the space does not actively represent what the PTW major here at City Tech

has to offer. The room in itself is poorly organized, systematically

inefficient, and currently does not have context which helps the users (students) build content.

The lack of context in the room design causes many disadvantages to both students and professors in these such ways, a) students are arranged in a very odd layout which creates blind spots that inhibit them from seeing other students and the professor, b) the arrangement of equipment such as the Smart Board, printers, and LDC display

screen again creates a separation that excludes some students and includes others; this also prohibits and interferes with the interactive and participatory atmosphere in which the lab seeks to achieve, c) the larger open empty space in the center of the room creates an awkward area in which there is no clear use for.

These three specific problems of the room inherently highlight other problems of the room such as the lack of definition of the space. What I mean by definition is that the room lacks coherency and proper implementation of a system that benefits both students and professors. The room is intended to be an interactive Professional and Technical Writing lab that enables students to create technical documents but the lack of both equipment, layout of physical space, and the organization of tables and computers creates a mess of a room instead of a lab that targets users, content, and context.

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Deliverables

I envision for this project that a schematic visual drawing will be the way in which to best showcase this idea. I will be creating two drafts of the room, the room as it stands now “the mess” and the recreated and updated version. These two versions will enable me to tell a story of what the room is, what it means, and who will be its primary users. By defining the space visually, I will be able to argue that with a well-designed and organized room PTW students will be able to perform better because there is a clear context and content orientation that enables this. The room itself will be a visual representation of what and how it can contribute to the narrative and experiences of users.

The deliverable will be a comparison of a before and after of Namm 601-B. The comparison will highlight information architecture principles that

govern placemaking. Within the comparison I will elaborate how with my newly designed space evokes a clearly defined context, content, and users. In creating such an intricate and detailed deliverable I will need to:

- To be able to define the space as it stands now.
- Creating a key for specific and important elements of the room.
- Justify necessary implementations to the room such as equipment.

I must be able to justify each addition or subtraction from the room in order to clearly document how it improves the design of the space and the overall informational structure of the room.

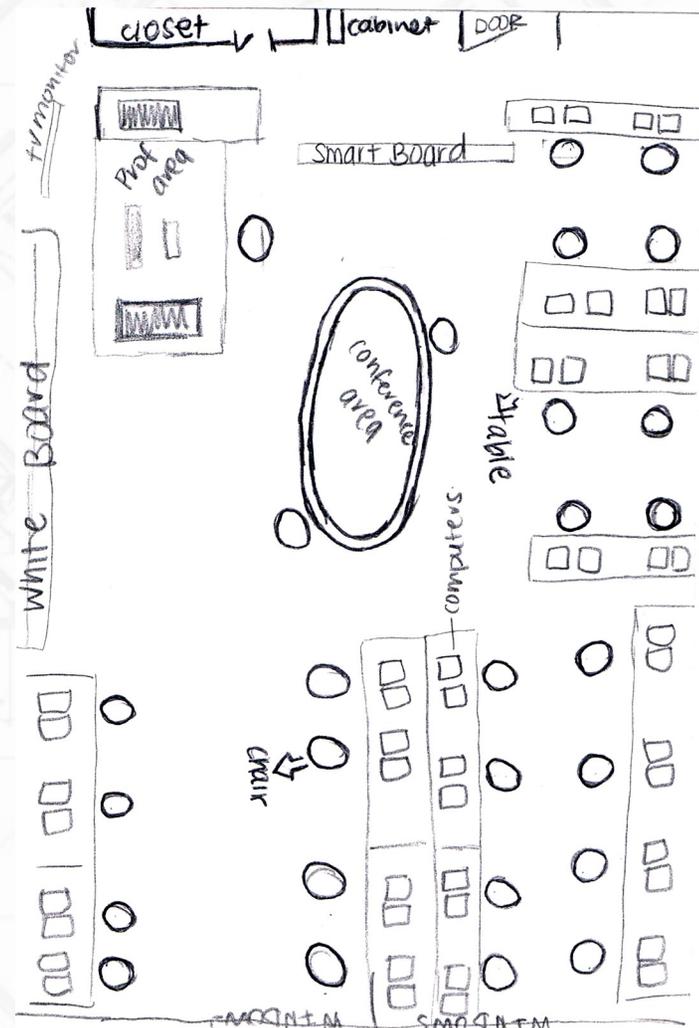
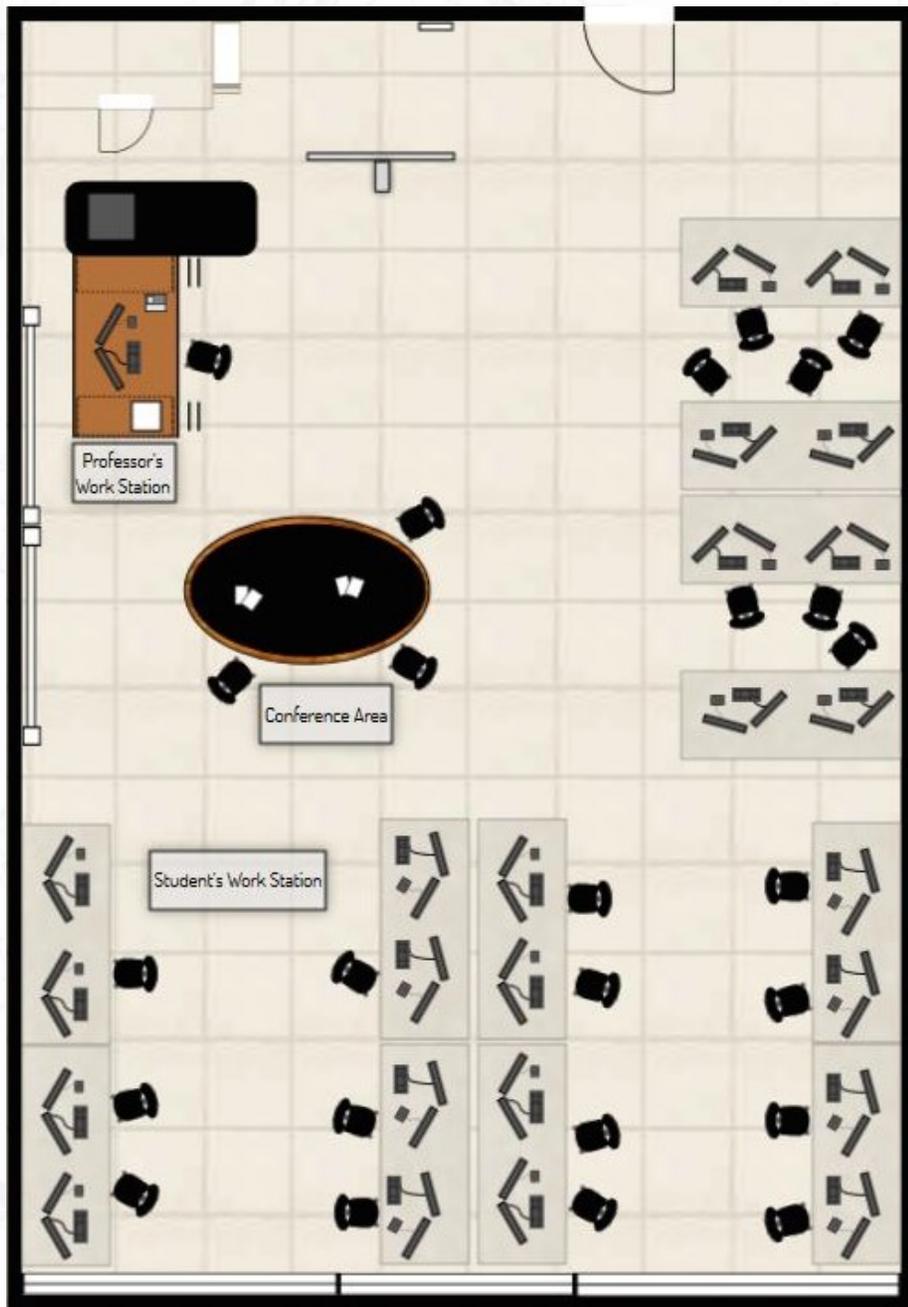


Figure 4

Room N 601-B

These are illustrations of room N 601-B as it stands now at The New York City College of Technology (City Tech) . The room is primarily used for the Professional and Technical Writing major (PTW). Student of the major spend majority of these classes in this single room and while it is designed for accommodating students it is not designed in a systematic way that functions for students, or contextualizes the principles of the PTW major which are collaboration, communication, and creativity .

Figure 3 & 4 . Visualizations of Room N 601- B before redesigning.

The professional and Technical Writing Major (PTW) at City Tech has enabled me to create a symbiotic relationship with room N601-B. It has a place of creation, learning, frustration, and growth. I have said some of my most inspiring words in the room, and brought some of my most brilliant ideas to life. However, the space of the room limits creativity, connection, synergy, and above all purpose. The space is predominantly used by PTW students yet lacks the contextualization of both the major and its students. In any place of information architecture there needs to be a clear cut definition of content, context, and user¹ (pg.32). The place in this case being room N 601-B lacks the definition of these three inherent core concepts of information architecture.

Any space whether a virtual or physical is expected to be an experience that represents their best interests, for example a bank website allows for customers to func-

tion in a space that creates the same functions of the physical space. In the case of room N 601-B it is to evoke the core values, and principles of a new major that, "...is designed to prepare students to communicate clearly and effectively using a variety of tools and media. Students gain competencies that include writing, editing, problem solving, document design, rhetoric, interpersonal communication, collaboration, specialized expertise, and fluency in modern communication technologies"². However, the room in which PTW students have been placed into to create, learn, and produce documentations of these learned principles is not effectively depicted in the systemic design of the space. The place of N 601-B as it stands lacks the definition that it is being used to foster PTW students' creativity, learning, and overall educational growth.

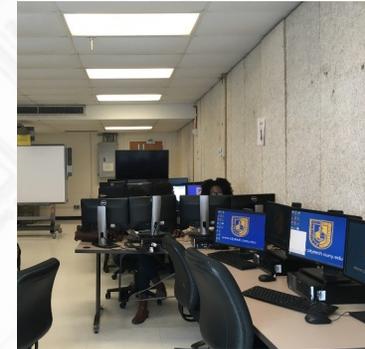


Figure 5. View of room N 601-B



Figure 6. View of room from conference area.



Figure 6. View of conference area, Professors' Workstation, Printing station, and Smart board.

“With physical spaces we experience them as contexts that differ from one another, supporting different needs”³ (pg.54), we expect them to influence or support the needs of what they presume to be. What I mean by this is that the place of N 601-B has been deemed a lab for PTW students; a lab that allows for students to collaborate, create, and learn, yet the layout constricts this. Students’ work stations limit interaction between both students and professor and the meeting or ‘conference area’ is cramped and does not seem to fit where it is positioned, it seems to have been an afterthought within the room. The room itself does not provide a clear understanding of how students create or function within. There are no defined spaces in which collaboration is highlighted due to work stations limiting this, there are no defined spaces for the professor to establish his or her position in the room, there are no defined spaces for students to conference with professors. I believe that with these key features defined within the space the context, content, and users become better understood. By simply changing the room layout, creation stations, and giving designated spaces to both students and professors I believe the room could be better defined as a space for PTW students.

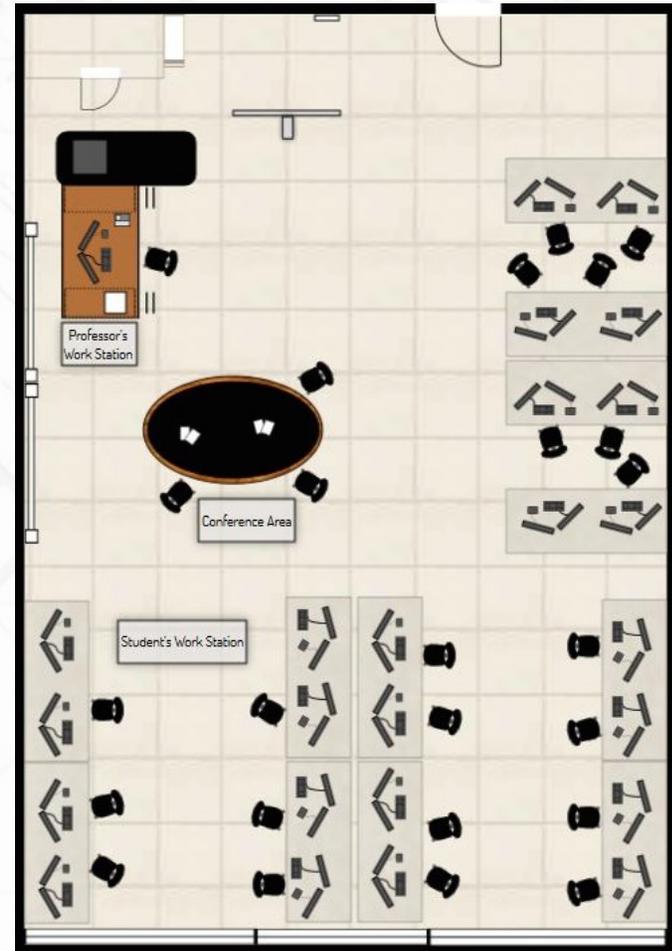


Figure 7. Aerial view of room N 601-B before redesigning

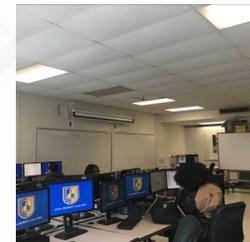


Figure 8 & 9. Photographs of room N 601-B

1 Rosenfeld, Morville, & Arango Jorge. *Information Architecture for the Web and Beyond*. Sebastopol: O'Reilly, 2015. Print.

2 The New York City College of Technology. *English Degrees*. N/A N/A 2015. Web. 17 May 2016.

3 Rosenfeld, Morville, & Arango Jorge. *Information Architecture for the Web and Beyond*. Sebastopol: O'Reilly, 2015. Print.

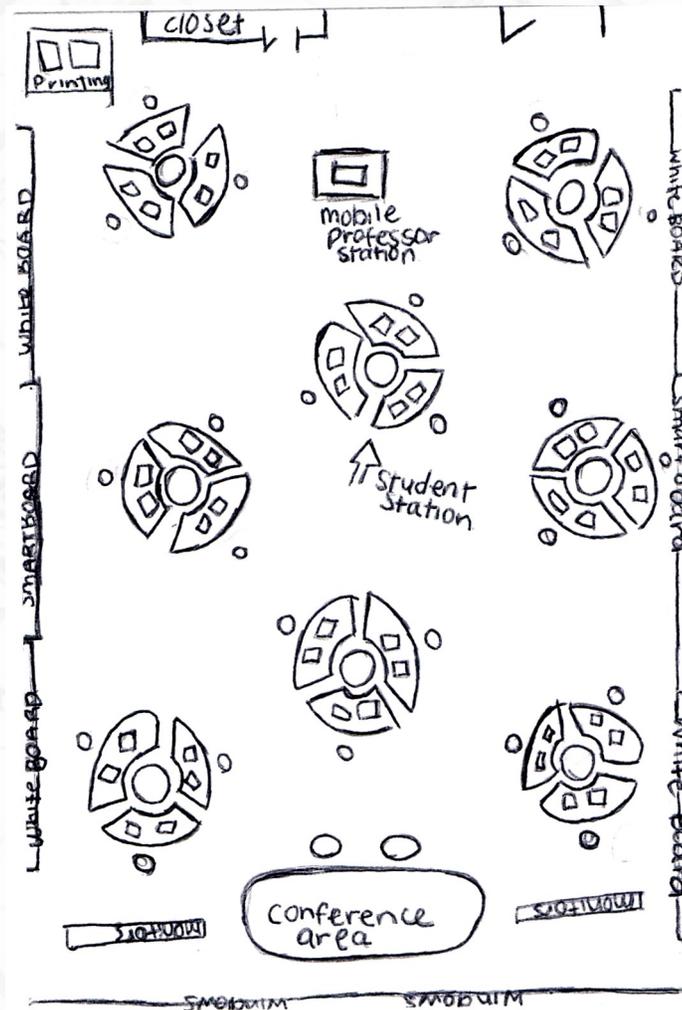
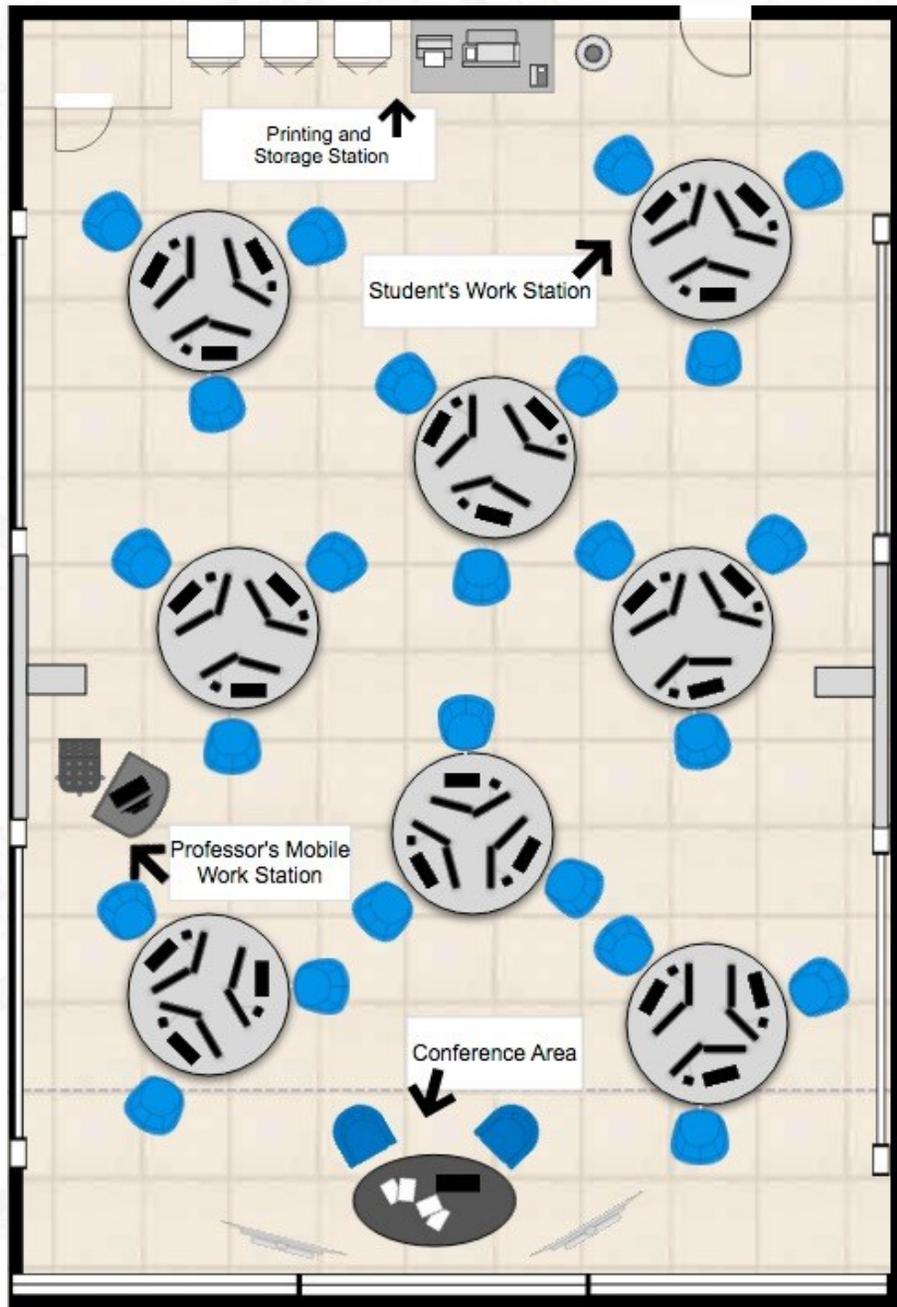


Figure 11

Room N 601-B Redesigned

These are illustrations of room N 601-B redesigned in a way that brings key information architecture principles to light. The room is now designed in such that content, context, and users are better seen and understood. By defining the room and its primary purpose to be for Professional and Technical Writing majors it can be seen how best to navigates one way through the room, and also understanding the need for the stations and the layout of the space.

Figure 10 & 11. Visualizations of room N 601-B

This new and improved design for room N 601-B is significantly different from room which stands now. The creation of this place was designed systematically from the choice of students per table to the position of the printing station. As I began drafting this room I envisioned a room that made use of the space but in such a way that it created places with the space that represented what the PTW major stands for. This new major aspires to be a systemic learning opportunity for students to learn to communicate effectively and work in such a way that fosters leadership, collaboration, and expertise. Within this room you will notice that students are situated in desks that house three students; the choice of having three students at a desk was to allow students to:

1. Be able to build interpersonal communication skills in a smaller more intimate setting.
2. Be able to interact with both the professor and other students that was not limited by constrictions of positioning as within the room as it stands now.

When the space of N 601-B is approached it should be recognized as a space that fosters collaboration and interaction and not a space that limits it. "Over time, cultural con-

vention and patterns of use have led to the evolution of these spaces, objects, and forms into the structures we recognize today. The difference between them make it possible for us to navigate and make sense of the world around us" (pg. 55). In the room there is a clear pattern of use, there are stations that are designed for production, collaboration, and conferencing. These patterns of use allow students to navigate their way in the room from station to station making full use of them because they are designed for a specific context. In this new design of N 601-B there is also a station for the professor to assert themselves at any position of the room. The mobile station allows the professor to travel around the room to work side by side with students. This choice of design helps to support the claim of the room being a designed place that helps to create a culture of community, collaboration, and uninterrupted interactions.

Each station within the room is designed with the intention that it allows for the best interaction possible. Although, not a major component of Information architecture it is the experience which we must focus on in this instance.

The room as it stands does not give an experience; it inhibits one thus failing any type of system of information architecture. The experience is what guides the users to acknowledge the context of the place. In a place with an experience that supports the context it will become a system that functions, it gives the meaning to the users. This meaning in turn interprets content and context. In physical places there needs to be outstanding identifying characteristics, which allow for it to be seen for the place it is designed to be. The new design for room N 601-B allows for both students and professors who interact with the space to interpret it as a place for collaboration, community, creation, and above all learning.

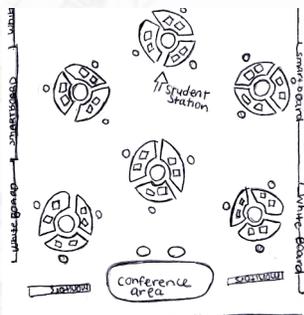


Figure 12

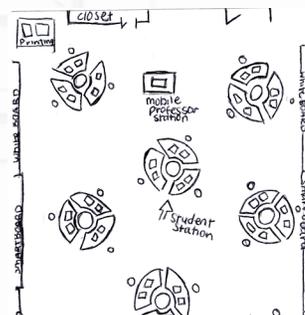


Figure 13

Figure 12 & 13. These figures are sketches of the redesigned N 601-B

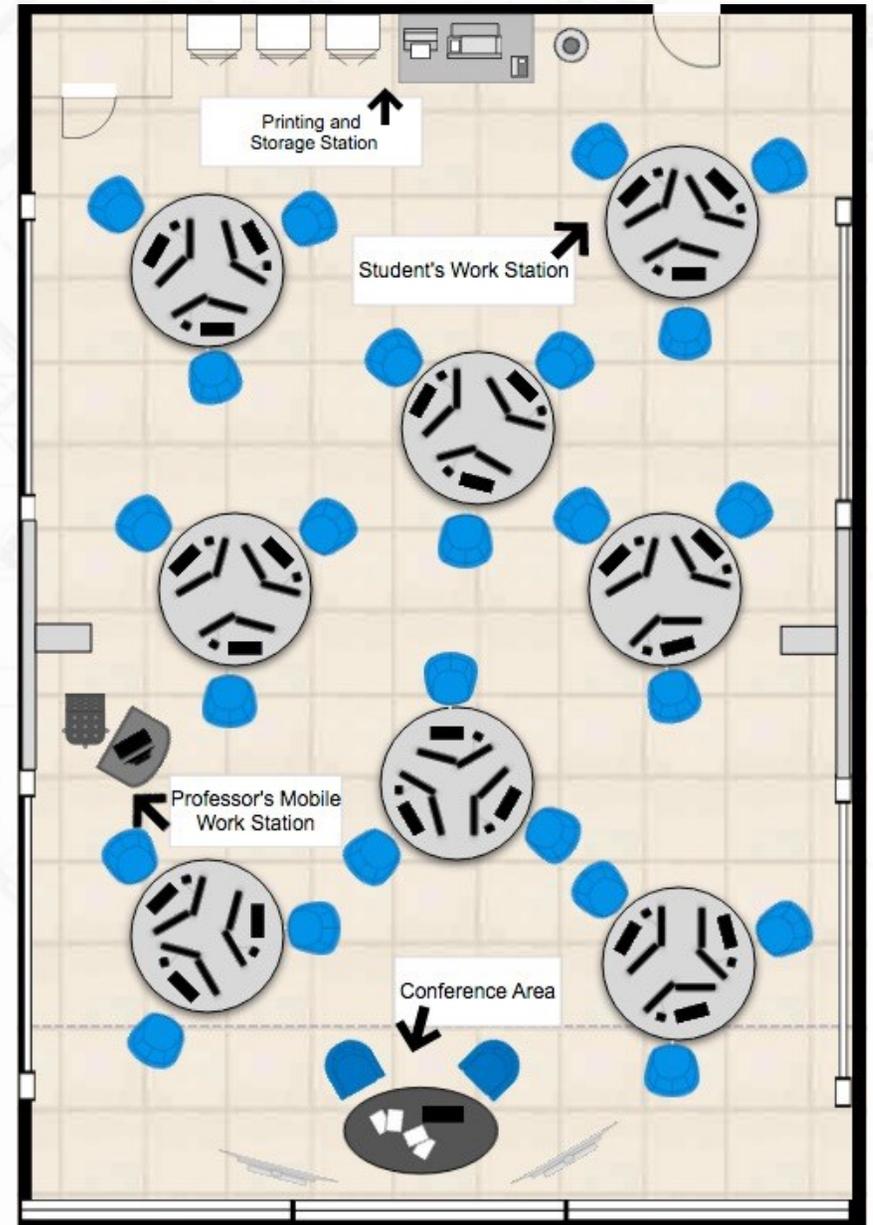


Figure 14 Aerial View of N 601—B redesigned