



Geffen Academy at UCLA

STATUS/COMPLETED AUGUST 2018, LEED GOLD PENDING **LOCATION**/LOS ANGELES, CA **PROGRAM**/75,000 SF ADAPTIVE RE-USE FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL

Table of Contents

Executive summary	3
Scope of work	4
School and community engagement	5
Educational environment	6
Physical environment	10
Results of the process and project	14

Executive summary

An “Open Library” inserted into an existing building creates an armature for independent learning at Geffen Academy, a new 620-student middle + high school at the southern edge of the UCLA campus. Its design was propelled by a visionary educational agenda.

A New School

The idea of introducing a middle/high school on the UCLA campus was initiated early in 2015. In December of that year we were selected as the Architect for the project. Over the next two and a half years we collaborated on the realization of the Academy's educational vision as they developed (and staffed) a brand new enterprise that called for an innovative learning environment. Work began with programming and proved to be a creative and collegial effort including not only School leadership but also UCLA Capital Programs and a General Contractor who came on board as construction managers at risk in the design development phase.

Goals

The Geffen Academy set out to offer a world-class education to a diverse group of students from across greater Los Angeles including children of UCLA faculty and staff. Curriculum and program were based on evidence that secondary school students develop their full potential when they are engaged in solving the critical problems that confront our society.

The Academy envisioned a model educational setting designed to encourage engagement, curiosity and collaboration. That objective required three key components beyond instructional space: independent study areas; spatial organization that encouraged interaction student-to-student, and student-to-faculty; and focus on wellness including natural light, connection to outdoors and on-site healthy dining.

Key Outcomes

The project was delivered under budget and opened in its permanent home in September 2018. We spoke to Academy educators about how the environment supported the program. That feedback can be found in the *Educational Environment* section of this submission. At the end of April 2019, we will have the opportunity to gather post occupancy feedback from the students themselves.



Entry - “Living Room” is the first in a series of individual and group study spaces that make up the Open Library.

An array of colored cables screen the exterior circulation stair and animate the existing facade.

Scope of work

75,000sf adaptive re-use

Process

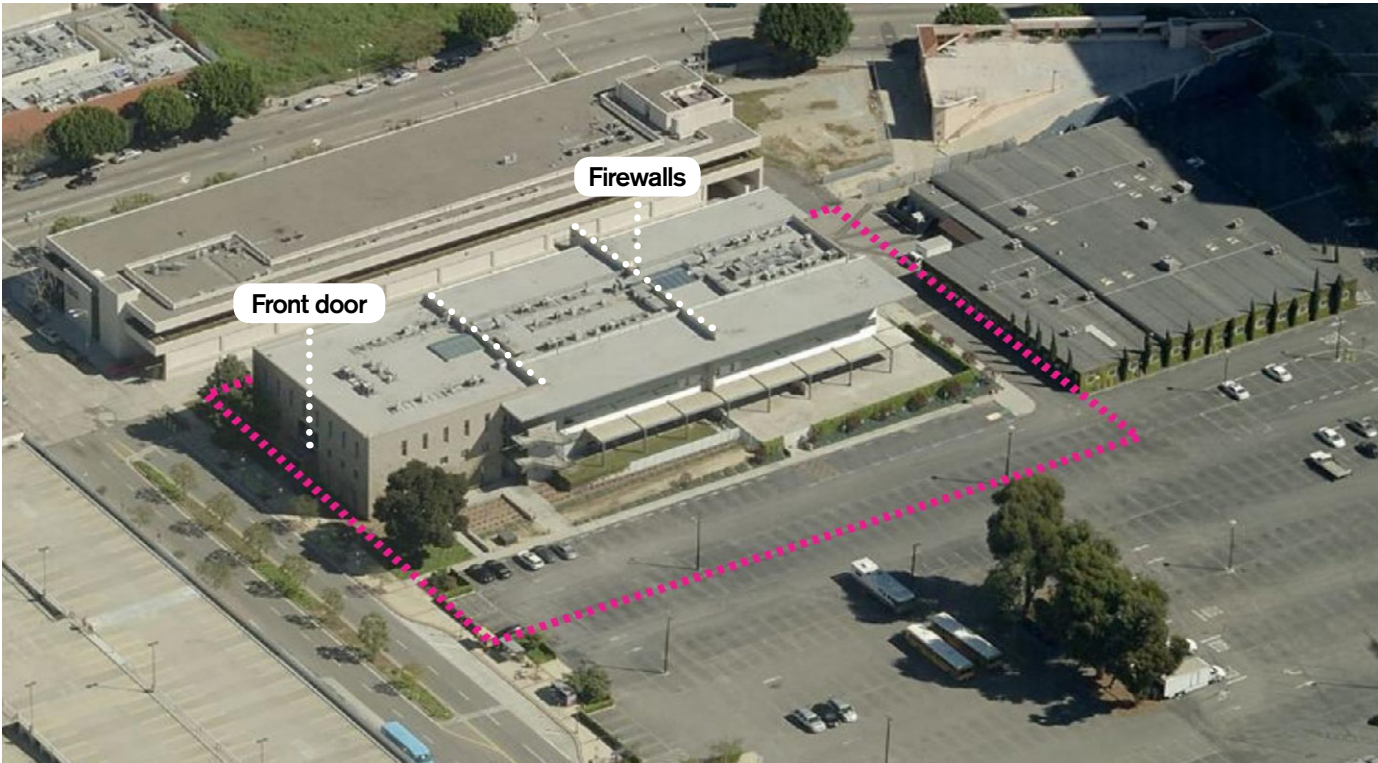
The process was collegial and fast; initiation to completion took just two and a half years, which speaks to cooperation between client (user group and Capital Programs Project Managers) , design team and contractor. Work began with the architect working with the user group to flush out a program and design while simultaneously undertaking a building assessment. Growing technical information with the design process proved invaluable relative to development of viable design options. The contractor joined the team as the Construction Manager-at-Risk during Design Development, provided cost estimates, reviewed existing conditions and brought in sub-contractor input early. By the time construction began, there were very few surprises and work progressed smoothly - which is unusual for adaptive reuse and validates the benefit of proactive investigation of existing conditions.

Construction Scope

The building envelope was in good condition and roll up glass doors on the ground level offered strong indoor/ outdoor connection but the school's parking lot setting, institutional identity, and need for a drop-off zone and welcoming entry needed to be addressed. Ninety-four foot deep floor plates, combined with opaque rated corridors, made daylight penetration to the middle of the building difficult. Inside, the three bay firewall configuration with no interior stair connecting all three floors made circulation awkward for school use. An

HVAC life cycle evaluation determined that all systems needed to be replaced. UCLA aspired to LEED Gold and the team was encouraged to keep and reuse as much of the existing building as possible for both environmental and budget reasons. Schedule was also a key driver as the school was keen to open as soon as possible.

Adding a new staircase that stitches all three levels of the open library, and removal of the requirement for fire rated hallways allowed us to cost-effectively use interior glass - a strategy key to achieving connectivity throughout. Upper floors were gutted (save shafts and concrete structural walls) to accommodate the need for larger classrooms. A minimal renovation to the ground floor was an economic choice that converted existing spaces to classrooms, athletic space, food service, and art studios. Light fixtures that now give identity to the kitchen were re-purposed for both cost effectiveness and environmental responsibility.



Existing conditions

aerial (above)

(from left to right) front door, 2nd floor hallway, 3rd floor hallway, 3rd floor north lounge



School and community engagement



As a new school, the Geffen Academy at UCLA is only beginning to build its long term extended community. Its core community is the UCLA campus, its people, resources and legacy.

The establishment of the school speaks to the vision of UCLA stakeholders who saw the need for exemplars of best practices for secondary school education. They also saw the value of an on-campus school to support recruitment and retention of UCLA faculty and staff, as well as introduce a diverse range of families from outside of the University sphere to its resources and opportunities. When the subway extension along Wilshire Blvd is complete in 2023, the school will be well-linked to communities across the Greater Los Angeles region.

UCLA provided the 75,000 sf existing building that capitalizes on a gift from David Geffen to establish the school. Part of the gift funds a financial aide program to benefit low and middle income families, estimated at 40% of the student body.

Geffen students get to engage with the University community

Location

15min walk from UCLA's main campus.

Three minute walk to future subway stop that will connect the school to communities further east.

in many ways: “UCLA at Geffen Academy,” is an annual event at which professors and staff offer workshops for Geffen students at their campus. World-renowned astrophysicists, legal historians, culture makers, literary scholars, and designers of robots visit to share their learning and accomplishments. As the Architect for the project we will also be participating in the event which is held in late April.

Geffen students also get a chance to interact with UCLA undergraduate and graduate students who, as members of BruinCorps and CalTeach contribute at Geffen Academy, as teacher’s assistants, tutors, and student chaperones. Student athletes are exposed to UCLA's long and impressive athletic legacy. Geffen Academy students have access to the UCLA Student Activities Center, Drake Stadium, Sunset Canyon tennis courts, and intramural fields.

There was no established school community, allowing the freedom for leadership to freely engage in new ideas.

“The new school [Geffen Academy] is part of a larger [UCLA] plan to create a network of community schools, which currently consist of the Lab School and Community School...Graduate School of Education and Information Studies GSEIS is also in the process of creating a new community school in South Los Angeles to expand the network.”

UCLA DAILY BRUIN, NOVEMBER 11, 2015

Educational environment



[First-hand feedback](#)

We asked the Head of School to provide an overview of the educational vision. The specific educational goals, implementation parameters and strategies employed to achieve those goals are outlined in *Results of the Process & Project* (pg. 14). In this section, we have also included direct feedback from faculty and staff on how the educational environment performs relative to your criteria around curriculum, variety of learning, teaching styles, and adaptability and flexibility.

“When I first began to speak with UCLA’s leadership about the possibility of creating a secondary school at UCLA, I asked: ‘What’s the university’s appetite for doing secondary schooling differently? This is the question that animates our work here at Geffen Academy. When should we continue with traditional methods and programs, and when might we consider doing things differently? You will find that we offer both here, as we believe that students deserve a robust, complex, kind, and evidence-based school environment in which to spend these formative adolescent years.’ ”

SIBYLL CARNOCHAN CATALAN, HEAD OF SCHOOL

(left) the Living Room becomes a venue for assembly.

(above) drop-off zone

“The school is inviting and engaging, as we hope are the lessons and activities.

The main entry to the school is through a living room space larger than any classroom, furnished to be comfortable to students whether working, socializing, resting, or having a snack. The central open library spine at each floor provides both student study space, with varied furniture options for individual and group work, as well as conference spaces of various size and shape. The outdoor patios on the first floor support the Innovation Track (I-Track) maker-space, dance, 2D and 3D art studios, as well as the dining commons (with its outdoor stage adjoining the dining space). General classrooms can be equipped and furnished for most disciplines, and re-equipped and re-furnished year to year with little extra cost or difficulty, to match changes in curricular choices and offerings.”

NEIL KRAMER, ASSISTANT HEAD OF SCHOOL

“The open library space enhances the learning experience.

In the library space students are provided with an array of books to choose from, featured on the open-facing shelves. Students are able to easily scan the shelves to discover new books or find books recommended by peers or educators. Additionally, the space is inviting due to the light which comes through the windows and the large couch near the windows. The chalkboard and the wall space provide opportunities for announcements, art, and displays (e.g. Black History Month, Women’s History Month). The Open Library space serves multiple functions, as it also used for advisory meetings and tutoring, provided by educators or Bruincorps members (UCLA college students).”

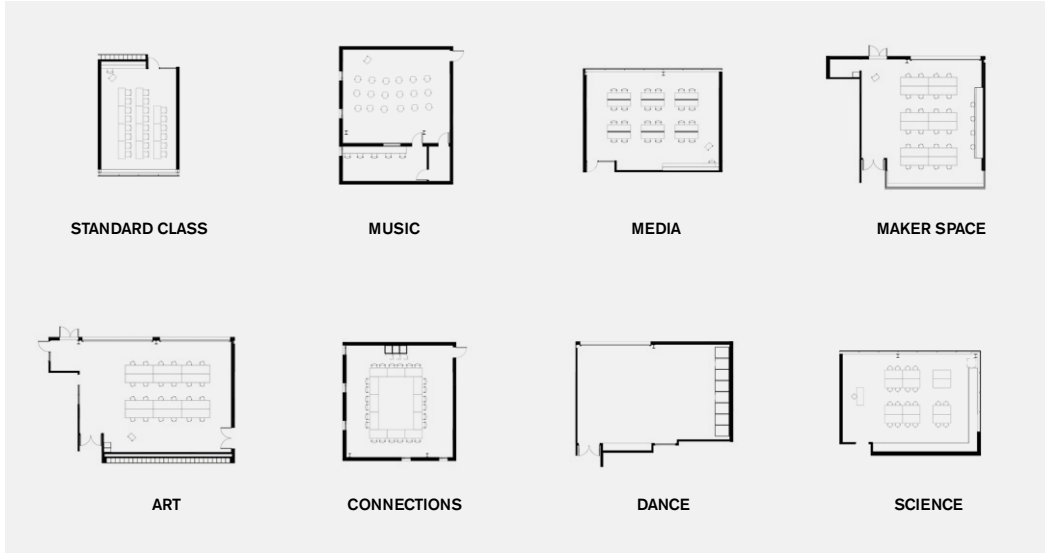
LEIGH-MICHAL GEORGE, ENGLISH/HUMANITIES TEACHER



Open library zones

(clockwise) entry/living room, 3rd floor adjacent to classrooms, 2nd floor library book display





Learning spaces

(clockwise) chemistry lab,
science salon, classroom
plans, standard classroom

“All the lab spaces are designed to standards typically found in professional lab environments in terms of access to equipment, storage and safety.

The level of customization for each discipline allows faculty to maximize the student experience without the need to share lab space and/or move classes. The science “salon” is a place where students can move to and from their classes to work in smaller groups, with a teacher, or alone if they are encountering difficulties in the classroom. The less intense atmosphere provided by this space allows for a more relaxed study environment to support the learning process.”

ELIZABETH ASHFORTH, SCIENCE DEPARTMENT





“The spaces allow students to explore new ideas and take risks.

The music department puts student composition and creativity at the center of all of our work. Having a recording studio as the centerpiece of our space allows students many opportunities they would not have in a more traditional space. We utilize the two practice rooms on a daily basis. However, we use them more frequently as break-out spaces for small-group ensemble composition projects in our MS and US classes.”

MICHAEL ALBERTSON, MUSIC DEPARTMENT CHAIR

Learning spaces (clockwise)

The Connections Room is a high tech classroom inspired by the idea of a White House Situation Room that gives students the ability to easily connect to other institutions via video conferencing.

Innovation Track [I-Track] Maker Space

Maker Space, 2D and 3D Art Studios, and Dance open onto outdoor patios.

Multipurpose Room for informal performances, dining and seminars. Music and theatre students also have access to UCLA performance spaces.



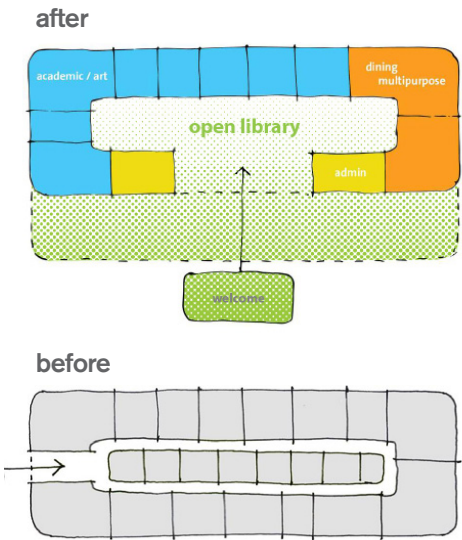
Physical environment

Approach to design

As mentioned, the “Open Library” is the organizing concept for the School and links all instructional space replacing generic circulation. It is a freely accessed immersive learning spine featuring individual and group study spaces (open and closed), as well as library functions, and extends from the front door, up and through the building’s three floors.

Relocating the existing building entry to the west side (see concept plan) accommodates student drop-off and allows for the creation of a welcoming entry courtyard. An array of colored cables that screen the exterior circulation stair animates the existing facade while ground level roll-up glass doors create strong indoor/outdoor connections. Moving inside, the Open Library’s “living room” replaces the traditional formal lobby with study and gathering space. Furniture here, and throughout, offers choice, comfort and bandwidth. Many furniture groupings are located to nurture nested communities of interest such as the science salon and music lounge.

(clockwise) concept plan, building plans, entry/living room

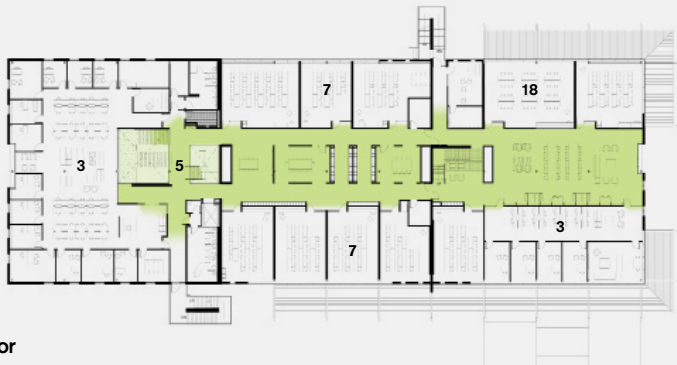


- 1 Entry
- 2 Living Room
- 3 Faculty
- 4 Meeting Room
- 5 Central Stair
- 6 Athletics
- 7 Classroom
- 8 Maker Space with Yard
- 9 Dance Studio
- 10 Art Rooms with Yard
- 11 Kitchen
- 12 Multipurpose and Dining
- 13 Patio
- 14 Music
- 15 Connections Room
- 16 Science Labs
- 17 Science Salon
- 18 Media Lab
- 19 Cable Screen
- Open Library

Third Floor



Second Floor



Ground Floor



Atrium + stair

A new three-story atrium is capped by a skylight which brings light deep into the building and illuminates this circulation hub which features a mural on one side and view into the faculty workspace on the other. Faculty spaces are usually screened from students, but at Geffen glass affords a clear view in and out to encourage community rather than hierarchy. A few curated gestures like the contour map mural of the Santa Monica Mountains (a mirror locates the school) added to the concrete block wall in the stairwell are included to provoke curiosity. Generally, however, walls are left empty providing room for students to make the space their own.



Atrium + stair

(from left to right) ground floor, 3rd floor, 2nd floor looking into faculty space and athletics below

Collaborative Learning Community

We believe that the architect's role in the design of all schools is to provide an aspirational backdrop to learning where space, ornament and daylight create a sense of freedom and well-being. We also believe that a design should be resilient and approached interior improvements to be flexible and also easily reconfigured over time. Our task in the design of this school in particular was to set up opportunities that empower students to collaborate and take control of their education. We did this by designing a flow that encourages casual social interaction and offering choice (at many levels) that supports a student's sense of autonomy. The idea of a collective community of faculty and students emerges from this philosophy and in the case of Geffen Academy is manifested by the anchoring Open Library, strong connection between faculty work space, student spaces and focus on daylight and quality outdoor space.

Open library 2nd floor reading area



Sustainability

Sustainability begins with reuse of an existing building and this adaptive reuse is on target for LEED Gold through use of daylight and the aggregated impact of many visible and invisible strategies. Strategies include: shading film applied to existing glass enhances performance, LED lighting reduces energy load, new HVAC equipment reduces energy loads and water efficient faucets reduce water consumption. Where possible, existing building elements were reused. This was the case with light fixtures that were collected, relamped and relocated to provide lighting and identity to the student kitchen. Bringing daylight deep into the building is a signature feature of the design and was achieved in two key ways: interior glass partition walls and a new skylight that illuminates the atrium and stair. The skylight has a cellular inner layer that redirects light rays to reduce glare while still transmitting 70% daylight.

The building is located at the southern edge of the UCLA campus and surrounded by a parking lot which is slated for future development. For safety reasons, the school is fenced and independently secured. The impact of the featureless parking context is mitigated by the new encircling drought tolerant landscape that highlights the natural environment and provides dappled shade to outdoor spaces. The cable banner, visible from a distance, signifies the building's new use on a campus that limits branding.



(clockwise) student kitchen, cable screen, dining courtyard

Results of the process & project

Outcomes

It is gratifying to see the school used as intended and beginning to develop its own sense of identity as students display the content of their work and interests. The school embarked on several innovative approaches to the design of their learning environment and they are paying off.

The well used Open Library clearly anchors the school as planned, offering opportunity for engagement between students and teachers and providing spaces for independent and group study. Glass partitions that allow views into classrooms have been embraced and placing the shared faculty workroom in full view has proven productive from both a collegial and community building standpoint. Teachers' comments included in the *Educational Environment* section relay that they are testing the adaptability of instructional and other spaces with success. We hear that the stylish kitchen, designed to deinstitutionalize food service is seen as a valued investment in changing perceptions about healthy eating and the mix of furniture in the outdoor dining commons encourages conversation. As mentioned, we return to the school at the end of April for a post occupancy evaluation with the students. We look forward to hearing firsthand what they have to say.

Community Goals

The school has just opened, been embraced by the larger community and the experiment is taking shape:

"[Geffen Academy] keeps UCLA and Los Angeles at the forefront of education innovation. Being open to new ways of teaching is where transformation begins, learning happens, and community is built"

- Gene Block UCLA Chancellor

Formulating a clear set of shared goals early in the process aligned expectations and facilitated design.

Education goals

- A sense of welcome and identity
- Facilitation of interaction, student-to-student and student-to-faculty
- A setting to promote student empowerment, curiosity and independent study
- Celebration of all disciplines and career paths including STEAM and CTE
- Wellness (including healthy eating)
- School structured as a community
- Allow for instructional experimentation

Implementation parameters

- Tight budget and fast-track delivery
- Parking lot context
- Existing building requiring new systems and significant code upgrades
- LEED Gold certification

Strategies employed to achieve those goals

- Emphasis on outdoor and landscape design
- Open library with variety of closed and open work spaces available to all
- Transparency between activities and between staff and student workspace
- Daylight
- Seating choice - to accommodate preference and foster a sense of empowerment
- Flexible and adaptable learning spaces



