

University Canada West: Building an iconic campus experience



Photography: UCW Architecture; Bjarke Ingels Group

Drawing students from more than 90 countries, University Canada West (UCW) is an innovative business and technology-oriented institution with two campuses in downtown Vancouver – the West Pender Campus in the heart of Vancouver’s financial district and the new Vancouver House Campus in the Beach District. Its vision is to create an independent, accessible university with a practical focus and an emphasis on teaching excellence.

Maximizing the Interior Landscape of an Iconic Building

The UCW Vancouver House Campus is located at the foot of the Granville Bridge, one of the major arteries leading into downtown Vancouver. Designed by architect Bjarke Ingels, the award winning Vancouver House has been described as one of the “most anticipated buildings set

to shape the world.” Nestled between the off-ramps of the bridge, the all-glass, triangular building reveals itself to all that pass by. Originally an office building, the campus planners’ primary challenge was to create a transparent, vibrant interior that reflects UCW’s reputation for innovation and inclusivity. Anchored within the newly created Beach District, the University acts as a connector to the community, local industry and cultural attractions.

Making Use of Every Square Inch of Space

Edward Bagg, Vice President of Operations & IT Services, speaks to the significant challenge of planning inside this triangle: “Because space is at a premium in Vancouver House, we needed furniture that could flex and adapt to the shapes of the interior – so as not to waste a square inch of that space.” Additionally, the furniture should also support the University’s teaching style. “Students at UCW are looking to broaden and adapt their knowledge and skill set in a very competitive and rapidly changing digital business environment, so the space needs to be able to adapt to changes in how we learn as well.”



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Brock Dykeman, President & Vice-Chancellor, adds, “We’re not a ‘sage on the stage’ type of place. Within the classrooms, we needed flexible furniture to support interactive learning styles. We wanted to be able to pull things apart and configure tables and chairs to support team-based learning, panel discussions and symposium environments.”

Designing a World-Class Experience

Beyond the classroom, the development team wanted to create a quality environment that reflects the top-tier stature of UCW’s brand. “Furnishings are integral to portraying that,” Brock expands, “We want our students, staff and community partners to enter this building and immediately feel uplifted and excited. It was also important to reflect our commitment to community by working with local manufacturers, like Global.”

A variety of soft seating compilations are featured in student common areas to support moments for connection, collaboration reflection and discovery. Angled soft seating with high backs, and acoustic surrounds, bookable circular ‘study pods’, and mobile desks and chairs that easily stack and tuck away, all contribute to a dynamic environment that shifts along with the needs of its users. Pops of color are used judiciously to add vibrancy and welcome, while not overloading the experience. Brock Dykeman says, “All of this helps shape an emotional landscape upon which to build some wonderful memories alongside a world-class learning experience.”

FEATURED PRODUCTS

Bakhita seating, Kate lounge, River+ seating, River Personal Harbour, Spritz task seating, Swap tables, Terina tables



Photography: Barrie Underhill





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