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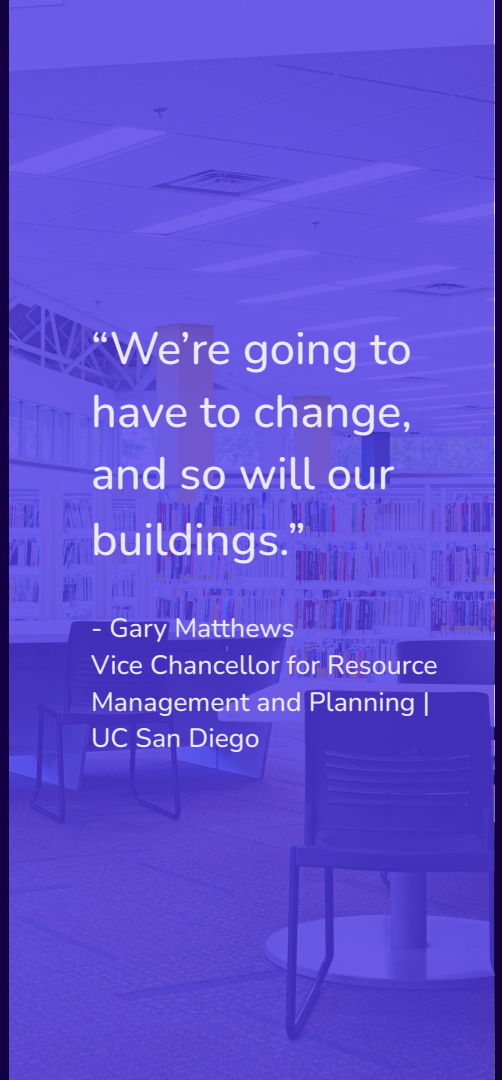
5 Ways Occupancy Monitoring Can Benefit University Space Planning

The latest occupancy monitoring technology can help universities make smarter space utilization decisions for today and the future.



“We’re going to have to change, and so will our buildings.”

- Gary Matthews
Vice Chancellor for Resource Management and Planning | UC San Diego

Introduction

University space planners face new challenges as a result of the pandemic and economic changes. Specifically changing needs for existing campus spaces.

Challenges include accommodating new hybrid learning and work models to shifting towards flexible, technology-enabled classroom spaces and optimizing the use of limited physical space, not to mention budget constraints. University space planners need to be innovative and adaptable in order to meet these challenges and create spaces that support the evolving needs of their institutions.

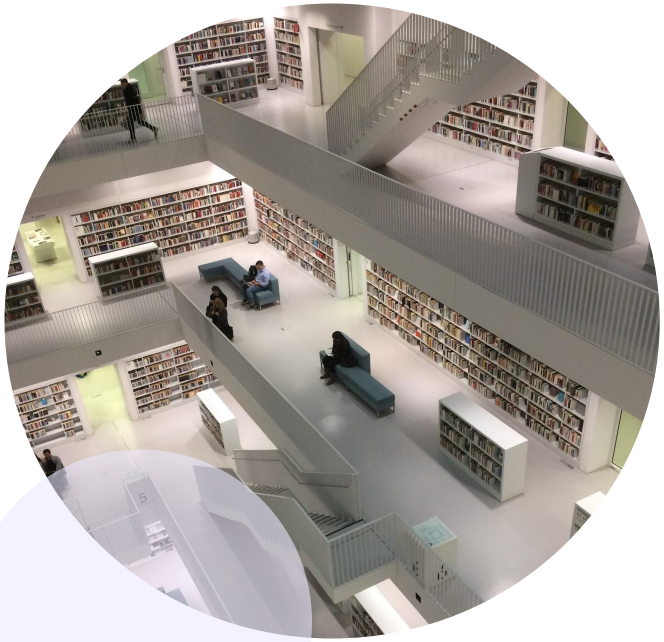
One way space planners are solving for their challenges is with **easy and affordable occupancy monitoring technology to inform data-driven space optimization decisions.**

What Is Occupancy Monitoring?

Also known as space utilization monitoring, people counting, or foot traffic monitoring technology, occupancy monitoring sensors count the number of people currently in a building, floor, or other physical space.

Occupancy monitoring offers numerous benefits to universities whether through real-time insights for foot traffic monitoring or historical usage data to inform building planning and development decisions.

Here are 5 ways occupancy monitoring can benefit university space planning...



1

Optimize Space Utilization

Maximize the use of your existing facilities. Using occupancy monitoring data versus manual head counting or anecdotal feedback can tell you at scale which buildings, floors, or specific spaces are being underused or are prone to crowding. Even compare foot traffic trends across spaces on campus during a specified period of time.

This information makes it easier to determine how to manage your high- or low-traffic spaces, and if necessary, reallocate space to meet administrative workplace needs, plan design changes, and/or invest in developing or acquiring additional square footage.

When you let foot traffic data be your guide, you can make decisions about HVAC usage and other overhead costs to reduce expenses and operate more efficiently and sustainably.

2

Inform Development Decisions

The greenest building is the one that was never built. Unused spaces can cost institutions millions, even billions, in wasted asset costs.

With space utilization data, administrators can rely on historical foot traffic data to only build what's necessary or make more informed decisions to terminate leases. This applies to both public student spaces and administrative office spaces. The data can also help validate new development or building renovation success by proving space usage over time.

3

Improve Visitor Experiences

Foot traffic data can also provide insights into how people interact with different areas within a space. For example, space utilization data can reveal which areas of administrative offices are most frequently visited, and which areas are ignored or overlooked. By understanding these patterns, space planners can design spaces that are more engaging and interactive, and that encourage people to spend more time in when they would be otherwise overlooked.

Occuspace offers privacy-friendly people counting sensors that require zero infrastructure changes to install and can immediately be used to automate space utilization management across buildings and/or multiple floors in a single building.

4

Reduce Energy Consumption

By monitoring building foot traffic flows over time, you can ensure that data, not guesstimates, will guide space planning decisions. Knowing how physical spaces are used increases efficiencies and could save universities potentially millions in facility energy costs.

Occupancy technology and foot traffic data can provide valuable insights into peak space usage and trends, enabling autonomous management of building controls such as lighting, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning. Making more effective use of low-density or unused spaces can save universities 10% or more on energy expenses. Avoiding unnecessary new development can even reduce a university's potential greenhouse gas emissions by 20-30%.

5

Enhance Emergency Planning & Design

Typical emergency planning has centered around natural disasters or security threats on campus. The pandemic has introduced a new kind of threat to building management when it comes to crowding.

Occupancy monitoring technology can inform maintenance and planning experts exactly how many students, faculty, or staff are in various spaces at any time. By providing visibility from the whole building to the floor level in real-time or over a period of time, administrators can use occupancy data to more effectively distribute resources. Planners can also focus on designing spaces that are safer operationally and can adequately accommodate traffic flows in an emergency.

In Summary

Space planners and administrators can now use space utilization data to identify actual usage. As a result, improve how they manage existing spaces, make informed design and construction decisions, and boost the visitor experience. This is an opportunity for space planners, architects, and building management to reassess how current spaces are used and create greater efficiencies in future facility consumption with data as their guide.

The space utilization monitoring technology that Occuspace offers provides a cost-effective, privacy-friendly, and easily adaptable solution for your institution's current and future space management needs.

Not sure how to get started with space utilization technology? You're not alone. In fact, an April 2023 Tradeline survey of over 100 university space planners revealed their **#1 concern is how to get started with space optimization and utilization.**

Read our checklist that follows for ways to get start with occupancy monitoring.

Checklist: How to Get Started With An Occupancy Monitoring Solution

Follow these steps used by Occuspace institutional partners to successfully implement space utilization monitoring technology at scale.

- [ ] **Choose the right solution:** Research and select an occupancy monitoring system that suits your infrastructure and data needs. Keep in mind it should be easy to install for immediate use, privacy-friendly for security, affordable at scale, and has the ability to report data down to the neighborhood level.
- [ ] **Scope data requirements:** Determine the data and end results you want. How do you plan to use the real-time and historical space utilization data – and where will it live for evaluation? Your solution should allow data to be exported or imported via API into an existing data management system like Tableau or ArcGIS for analysis.
- [ ] **Get leadership support:** Once the technology solution has been selected, present the concept to leadership for support. All of the usual supporting points from cost to deployment plans and use cases to be included.
- [ ] **Begin with a pilot:** Get off to a smooth start and create immediate champions for your initiative. Consider piloting your occupancy solution in spaces that are apt to get more stakeholders on board - for example, the space planning team's office and/or another department building.
- [ ] **Aim for expansion:** The best way to create a frictionless occupancy monitoring deployment is to expand to every square foot of owned space. This approach treats all spaces the same and allows all campus stakeholders to benefit. It also avoids any potential criticism that one department or space is being reviewed above others.
- [ ] **Make occupancy data actionable:** First, assign a dedicated resource to analyze the data for space planning needs. Second, make space a regular part of capital or annual planning and treat it as a resource like budget. For example, if a department regularly averages 70%+ occupancy consider allocating 20-30% more space to them next year.

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By capturing how many people are in a space, Occuspace is helping universities more accurately understand, control, and improve the way their buildings are being used. Make smarter operational decisions and improve the student experience with Occuspace's easily-installed, privacy-friendly occupancy monitoring technology.

Learn more today

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