

Project Description/Narrative:

RIT / School of Photographic Arts & Sciences (SPAS)

RIT's School of Photographic Arts & Sciences (SPAS) is one of the top ranked programs in the country. The 3rd floor of Gannett Hall, considered to be the heart of SPAS, had not been significantly renovated since its construction in 1965. It consisted primarily of outdated dark rooms, antiquated lab space, and narrow corridors with little access to natural light. The main goal was to enhance the environment and create new spaces that better showcase their state-of-the-art curriculum.

SPAS sought efficient open space for laboratory functions and instruction, a large multi-use 'airport' lounge, updated dark rooms, a sound capture room, and an equipment 'cage', a central hub for students to check out various photographic equipment. In addition, to better showcase the student's work process, they wanted transparency from the corridors into the educational spaces.

The floor plan was organized to cultivate more natural light, and promote straight-forward circulation. An access path was created to connect a newly built adjacent building to the north. This 'surgical' move was strategically designed to stitch the corridors together in a manner that avoided structural impediments, mitigated floor elevation deviations, and minimized impact to program spaces. The new axis created by this intervention generated a subtle, skewed, rectilinear geometry, and established the location for the highly trafficked equipment cage.

The interactive cage counter, emphasized by striated wood ceiling and wall panels, leads to the new multi-use lounge, a common gathering and work space for students and faculty. Centered upon existing south-facing storefront, the expansive lounge allows natural light to permeate deep into the floor plate.

To achieve a more spacious atmosphere throughout the renovated areas, the suspended ceilings were removed, exposing the concrete structure and utilities above. Clear storefront was installed along the corridors to enhance visibility, light transmittance, and further expand the perception of space.

A simple industrial aesthetic is the backdrop for the presentation of student work. Limited accents of color, texture, and natural wood are sensitively introduced to balance the austerity. And ringed light fixtures, emulating camera lenses, articulate the primary circulation nodes. The result is a rejuvenated learning environment for an evolving artform that is steeped in tradition.

AIA's Framework for Design Excellence:

Please choose a minimum of **three** of the ten measures of the [AIA's Framework for Design Excellence](#).

1. Design for Integration: What is the big idea behind this project and how did sustainability inform the design concept?

This is a renovation project of a building constructed in 1965. Instead of building a new structure, or addition, the College decided to reconfigure an existing floor that didn't work with their current curriculum and technologies. By repurposing underutilized space, strategically opening up ceilings, and establishing new straight-forward circulation corridors, the entire floor has been transformed with a modest budget.

5. Design for Economy: How does the project efficiently meet the program and design challenges and provide "more with less"?

The new spaces are designed to be flexible and malleable for various curriculums and technologies. The open lounge space is adaptable for instruction, casual meetings, social interaction, formal gatherings, critiques, and as workspace. Adjacent to the ever-busy equipment cage, the open lounge, with ample natural light, has become a primary hub for the photography sciences students, and the entire College.

9. Design for Change: Is the building resilient, and able to easily accommodate other uses in 50-100 years?

The simplicity of its design is enduring, and the spaces are multi-functional. By tapping into the existing volume of the structure, making subtle, yet impactful design moves, and by providing transparency between the circulation and instructional spaces, this project epitomizes doing 'more with less'. It offers a new inspirational palette for photography students to advance their artform well into the future.

AIA Rochester Community Impact Award:

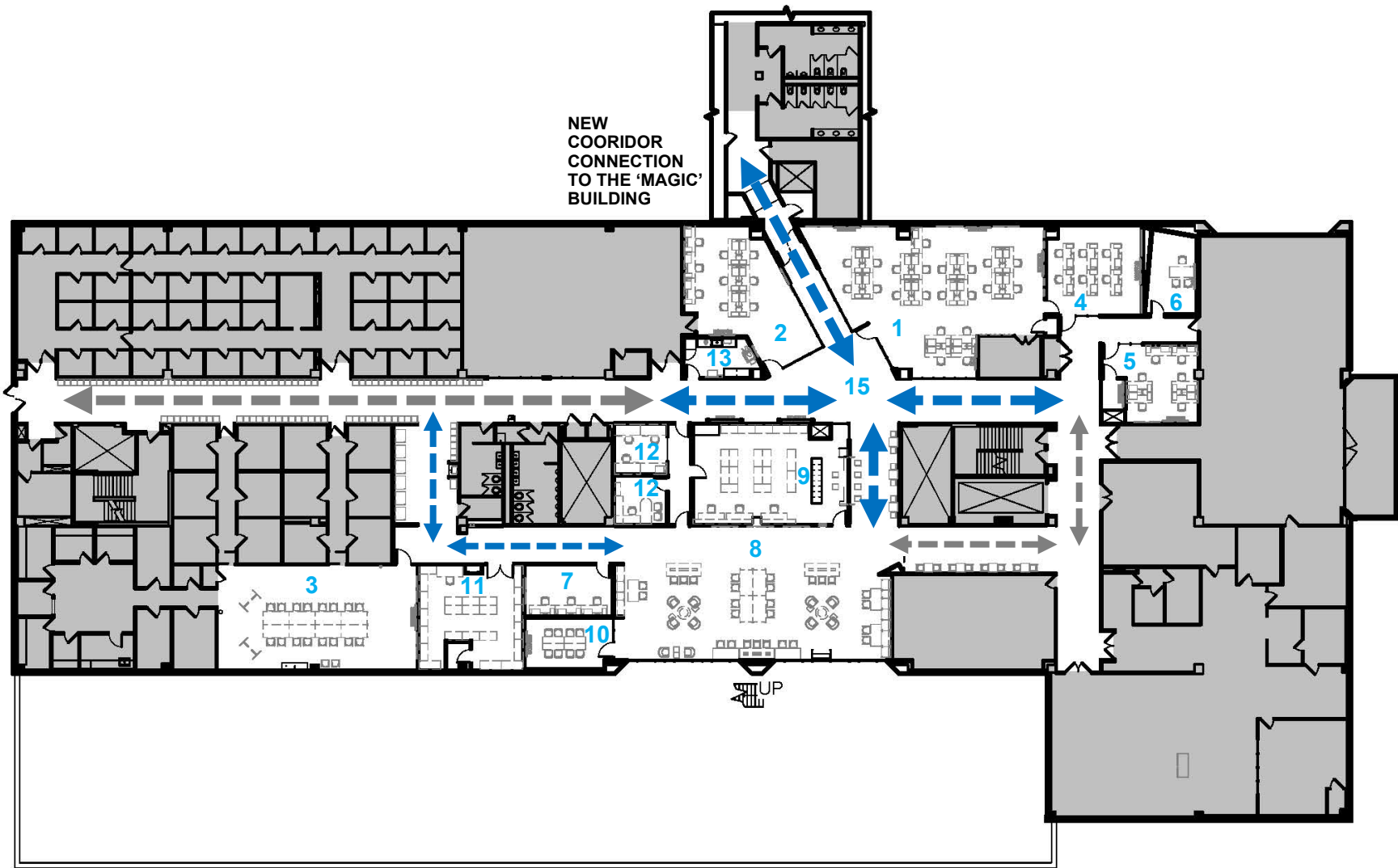
Community Impact Award Summary

Rochester has been referred to as the 'Image City' due to its historic roots in photography (Kodak), xerography (Xerox) and optics (Bausch & Lomb). Founded in 1829, Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) has focused upon blending technology with arts. RIT's School of Photography (now the School of Photography Arts and Sciences - SPAS) was initiated in 1930 in downtown Rochester, and later moved to the current building on the Henrietta Campus in the mid 1960s. Initially focused upon analogue (film) photography, the School has evolved to include digital imaging and other contemporary media technologies. This project enables the continuation of artistic and technological innovation in our community in the field of Photography and Imaging.



**MULTI-PURPOSE
'AIRPORT' LOUNGE**
(a common gathering
and work space for
students and faculty)

NEW
COORIDOR
CONNECTION
TO THE 'MAGIC'
BUILDING



FLOOR PLAN KEY

- 1. ESP (Digital) Lab
- 2. Grad Lab
- 3. Analog (Film) Lab & Darkrooms
- 4. Motion Media Lab
- 5. 4D Media Lab
- 6. Sound Capture Studio
- 7. Faculty Lab
- 8. 'Airport' Lounge
- 9. Equipment 'Cage' & Counter
- 10. Meeting Room
- 11. Supplies
- 12. Offices
- 13. Copy/Print/Break
- 14. Vending
- 15. Central Circulation Hub



Existing Circulation



New Circulation

THIRD FLOOR PLAN – GANNETT HALL ↑



NEW CENTRAL CIRCULATION HUB
(above)

PRE-RENOVATION PHOTOS
(above)

The new circulation hub formally links the adjacent academic building (behind), to the equipment 'cage' counter and 'airport' lounge (beyond). Clear storefront was installed along the corridors to enhance visibility, light transmittance, and further expand the perception of space.

Original corridor conditions.



CENTRAL CIRCULATION SPINE & HUB
(ringed light fixtures, emulating camera lenses,
articulate the primary circulation nodes)

RIT | College of Art and Design
**School of Photographic
Arts and Sciences**



PRE-RENOVATION PHOTO
(above)

Original photo equipment 'cage' counter with laboratory beyond.

NEW EQUIPMENT 'CAGE' COUNTER
(right)

The interactive equipment 'cage' counter, emphasized by striated wood ceiling and wall panels, allows students to test various photography equipment.





PRE-RENOVATION PHOTO
(above)

Original Electronic Still
Photography (ESP) Lab.

NEW ESP LAB
(left)

Transparent window walls were introduced throughout the floor to better showcase the student's work process and visually connect the circulation corridors with educational spaces.



PRE-RENOVATION PHOTO
(above)

Original lounge area.

NEW BREAK-OUT MEETING SPACE
(right)

A small break-out space for meetings and critiques is located adjacent to the bustling 'airport' lounge.

NEW 'AIRPORT' LOUNGE
(next slide)

The 'airport' lounge serves as a multi-use commons for gathering, work, and display space. It is strategically centered upon an expansive window wall that allows natural light to permeate deep into the floor plate.





MULTI-PURPOSE 'AIRPORT' LOUNGE

(a simple, industrial aesthetic is the backdrop for this rejuvenated learning environment for an evolving artform that is steeped in tradition)