Discovery Workshop Report of Results

prepared by

Herman Miller, Inc.

for

Virginia Tech
Newman Library Renovation

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HermanMiller

This report is the outcome of learning discovery workshop held on May 15, 2012. During the workshop we worked together to define and prioritize the attributes of the ideal learning environment for the second floor of the Newman Library at Virginia Tech.

Herman Miller deeply appreciates the opportunity to contribute to Virginia Tech's discovery and design process.

For additional information or questions about the session or the information contained in this report, please contact:

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TABLE OF CONTEXT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The interactive Discovery process asked participants to consider the existing 2nd floor of the Newman Library and then to develop attributes of a future, ideal library space.

WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

The workshop began with participants' introducing themselves and describing their favorite place to be. Without only a few exceptions, the participants talked about being outside, at the beach or a lake, although a few mentioned being in an especially memorable library space. This was followed by a brief presentation on the role of the environment in the learning process and a discussion of six important attributes of successful learning environments (social, adaptable, stimulating, healthful, resourceful, and sustainable).

Next participants were asked to list and discuss some of the obstacles and enablers to using the existing 2nd floor library space especially around group work.

After a short creativity exercise, participants were asked to think about the possibilities for the renovated 2nd floor. Specifically, they were asked to think about how a new group library space should feel and what it should do. This activity resulted in about six dozen items, which were distilled into the six top level attributes described below for voting (shown in order of relative importance after voting). The voting process asked participants to reflect on the relative importance of each attribute to every other attribute in terms of contributing to the success of the renovated library space, then to judge how the attribute is performing in the existing library space. Note that ALL attributes are important; the voting merely prioritizes them and provides an opportunity to understand how they are performing now and identify the level of consensus around them.

CONTROL   a space that supports individual and group agency (control) through choice, adaptability and flexibility of library spaces

INSPIRE   an atmosphere that motivates students to discover and learn

ENABLE SELF   a space that supports learning to create a whole person

ENERGY   a library space with either a high vibe or intimate according to function and zone

CULTURE   a space that reflect the norms, traditions and culture of Virginia Tech

CONTINUITY   a space that reflects the past present and future of knowledge and learning

The results, and subsequent discussion revealed that the ideal state of the renovated 2nd library floor will be **an inspiring environment that students can control to meet their individual and group needs to support self-learning**. Still important, but to a somewhat lesser degree will be energy level in the library, and the degree to which the renovated space reflects Virginia Tech's culture and maintains continuity among the past, present and future of learning. Participants were also asked to rank to what degree these attributes exist now on the 2nd floor. This report includes a matrix of those results, along with planning recommendations to achieve results related to all attributes.

OBSTACLES AND ENABLERS

Participants were asked to consider their current 2nd floor library space and situation and identify factors that are enhancing (enablers) and detracting from (obstacles) their ability to use the space effectively. Responses were focused on both place and practice.

Obstacles

What are the things that get in the way of using the current 2nd floor library space? A brief discussion of each obstacle resulted in higher level attributes (in parenthesis) that set the context for looking forward.

no coffee (choice, access to resources)

no personal storage (trust, security, safety, culture)

layout (informal interaction, awareness, energy, location)

faculty availability (connections, incentives for coming to library)

tables and chairs (choice, variety, comfort, group resources)

sound (choice, variety, acoustics)

lighting (natural setting)

interior general (design, natural setting, natural lighting)

not enough pin-up or whiteboards (display, group resources)

technology assistance (resources e.g. scanner help)

Enablers

What are the things that help us use the current 2nd floor library space effectively? A brief discussion of each enabler resulted in higher level attributes (in parenthesis) that set the context for looking forward.

can see everyone (visibility)

cafe (resources)

little bit of outdoor space (natural setting)

computers (technology)

smells like a library (design)

display spaces (resources, group resources)

tables are big (group resources, comfort)

ALL ATTRIBUTES OF THE IDEAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Participants were asked to think about how the renovated 2nd floor library space should feel and what it should do. The comments generated by all groups are shown on left. During the follow-up discussion, the most important attributes were drawn out and explored in more depth, as documented in the summary data shown on right.

RAW DATA FROM GROUP SESSIONS

21st century like star trek.
Broad Institute
communal coffee not keurig
communicate
connect
create sound environment
create ownerships levels of intimacy group
    lounge only place
de-institutionalize
different lighting for different activities
engage autistic students
evolving space
feel homey, warm and welcoming
floors of resources and the go back to working
    floor
foster creativity, curiosity, deep dive exploration
excitement, wonder, solitary engagement,
    community
gather information feedback and share
    information gained today
give people control over lighting
guide me but also have serendipity
how do i want to interact today
how to find students in library
i am open to discussion
i want to know what i don't know
inspire
marauders map
more user friendly
no demarcation of space
options of different activities speakers
research experts in the building
shouldn't echo
space learning from people
take away stuffiness
touch screen information
walls with different purposes white, cork
way to discover
what am i going to deposit in library today
what do you want to create today
what's are the fun thing going in in the library
where can i get help
white noise and next level of noise background
    important

SUMMARY DATE BY FACILITATOR

How should the new building feel?

inspirational

intimate (warmth, welcoming, comfortable, not institutional)

identity (cultural mirror, "hokie" culture)

awake (energy, forward motion)

continuity (relationship between future and past)

What should the new building do?

inspire to be successful, to be motivated, to be creative, to learn, to discover

facilitate and enable learning, socialization, problem solving

provide individual and group control of learning environment by being configurable, flexible, adaptable

energize and excite with a vibe, and opportunities for encounter

encourage investment in self-authorization and self-actualization

generate knowledge

reflect "life of the mind"

TOP LEVEL ATTRIBUTES OF THE IDEAL FUTURE LIBRARY ENVIRONMENT

The attributes that made up the obstacles and enablers to using the 2nd floor space currently, along with the ideal attributes of a renovated 2nd floor space were collapsed into the following six top level attributes of the ideal environment. Because they represent shared ideas by a range of participant types, the top level attributes are related and have several common elements. They are described here in alphabetical order.

CONTINUITY   CREATE SENSE OF CONTINUITY
        a space that reflects the past, present and future of knowledge and learning

CONTROL   ENABLE CONTROL
        a space that supports individual and group agency (control) through choice, adaptability and flexibility of library spaces

CULTURE   MIRROR CULTURE
        a space that reflects the norms, traditions and culture of Virginia Tech.

ENABLE SELF   ENABLE SELF ACTUALIZATION
        a space that supports learning to create whole person

ENERGY   CREATE ENERGY
        a space with either a high vibe or intimate according to function and zone

INSPIRE   INSPIRE
        an atmosphere that motivates students to discover and learn

RELATIVE IMPORTANCE TO A SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

Question: Looking back from a place of great success, which attribute was most important and by how much?

Using paired comparisons, participants ranked each attribute of the ideal 2nd floor library space. Responses are listed below in order of relative higher importance to lower importance, left to right. Note that ALL attributes are considered important; the voting merely prioritizes them and provides an opportunity to understand how they are performing now and identify the level of consensus around them.

As illustrated here and on the matrix the results reflect a very strong desire by workshop participants to have a new library space that provides individuals and groups the ability to control (change) the environment to support their unique learning styles. They also felt strongly that the space should inspire and enable discovery and learning. The notion of continuity among the past, present and future or reflecting the schools culture was considered less important than having a sense of energy, keeping in mind that all attributes are important, as they represented the distilled views of all participants.
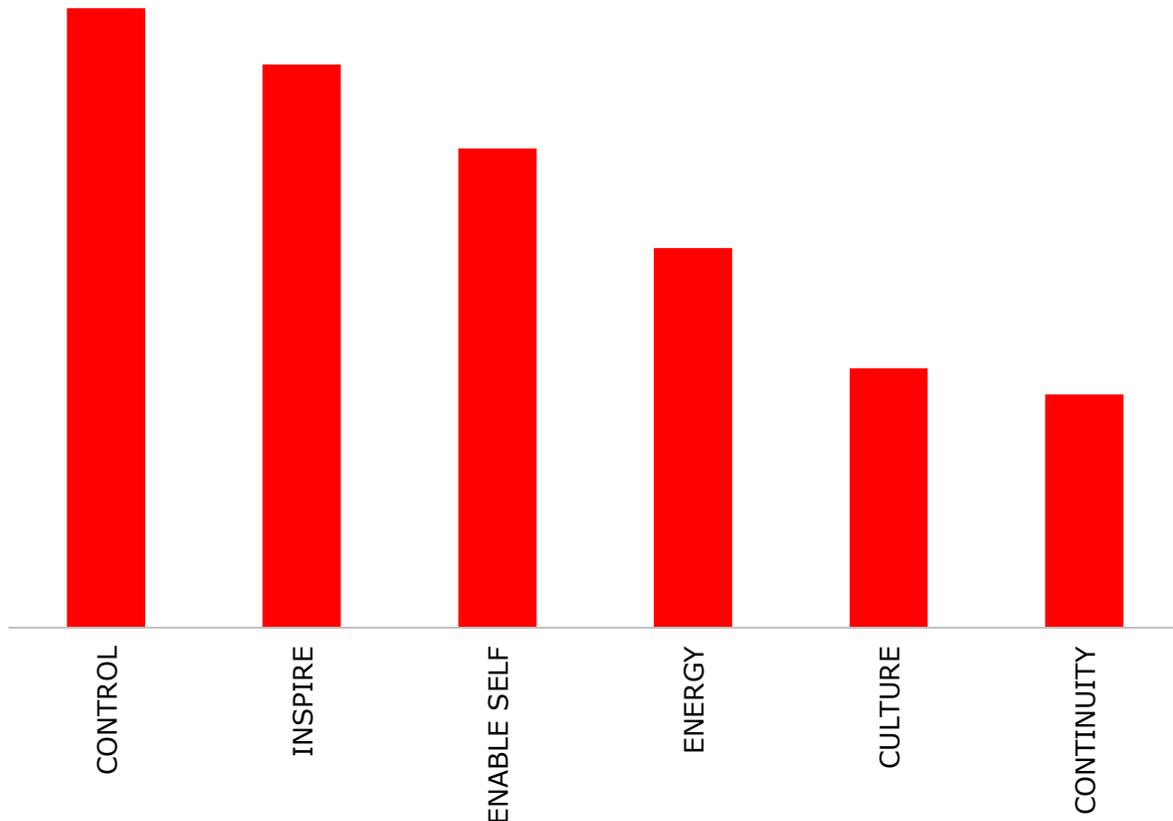
TODAY'S PERFORMANCE

Question: On a scale of 1 to 9, with 1 meaning not at all and 9 meaning perfect, how well are each of these attributes performing today?

Responses are listed below in order of voter response. It is interesting to note the high degree of consensus that all attributes are rated below 'adequate' (5 – the heavy red line) in terms of the degree these attributes exist or are performing today.

In particular, considering the importance given to the perceived importance of Inspiration, its very low ranking on the current performance scale represents a tremendous opportunity for the renovated 2nd floor to radically boost the importance of the physical environment in student's lives.
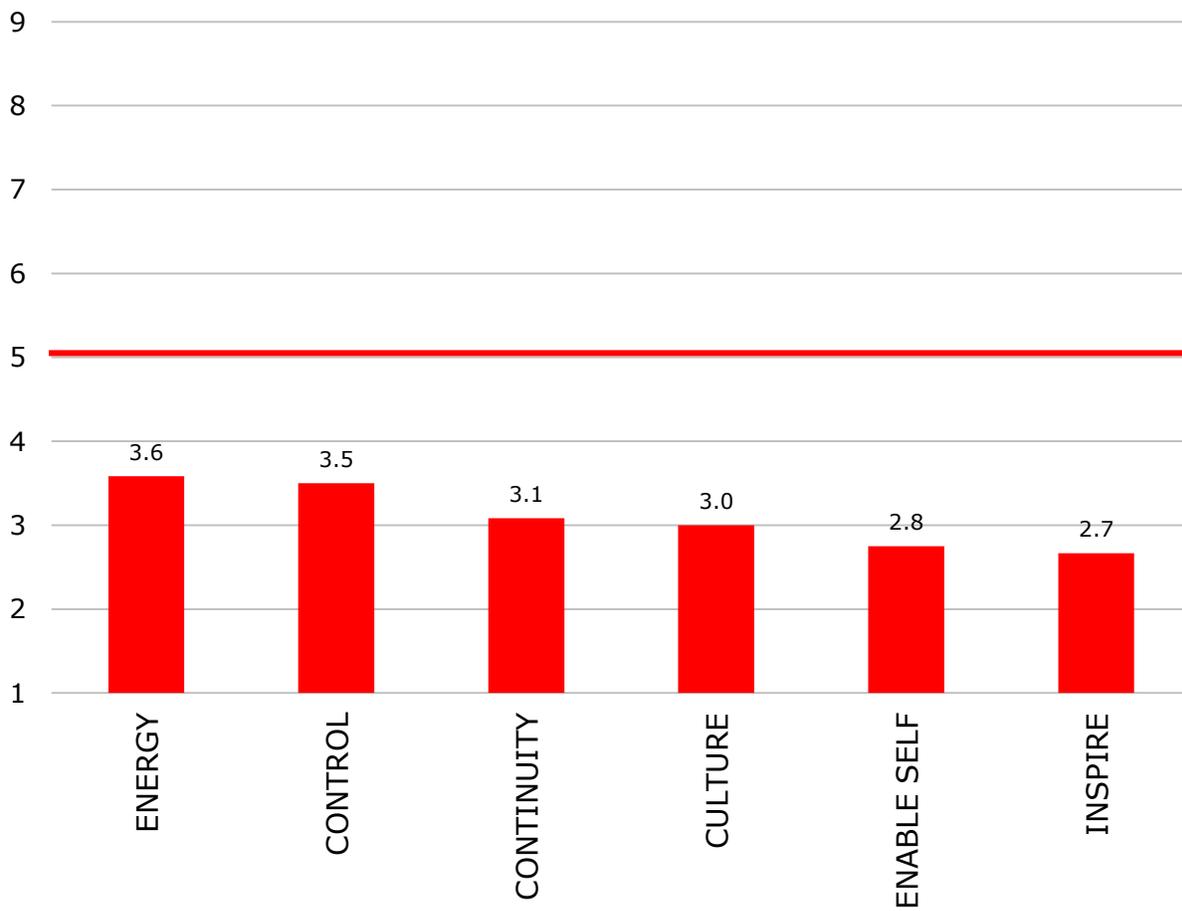
PROFILE OF RESULTS

The data collected during the visioning session reflects the group's consensus on the answers to two questions. "Looking back from great success, how important was each attribute?" (importance) and "How well is each performing today?" (performance). Plotting the responses results in the matrix illustrated below. As the matrix shows, one of four general conditions may exist for each attribute. As illustrated, there is also a circular direction in which issues tend to develop over time. The four conditions (or quadrants) are described on the following pages.
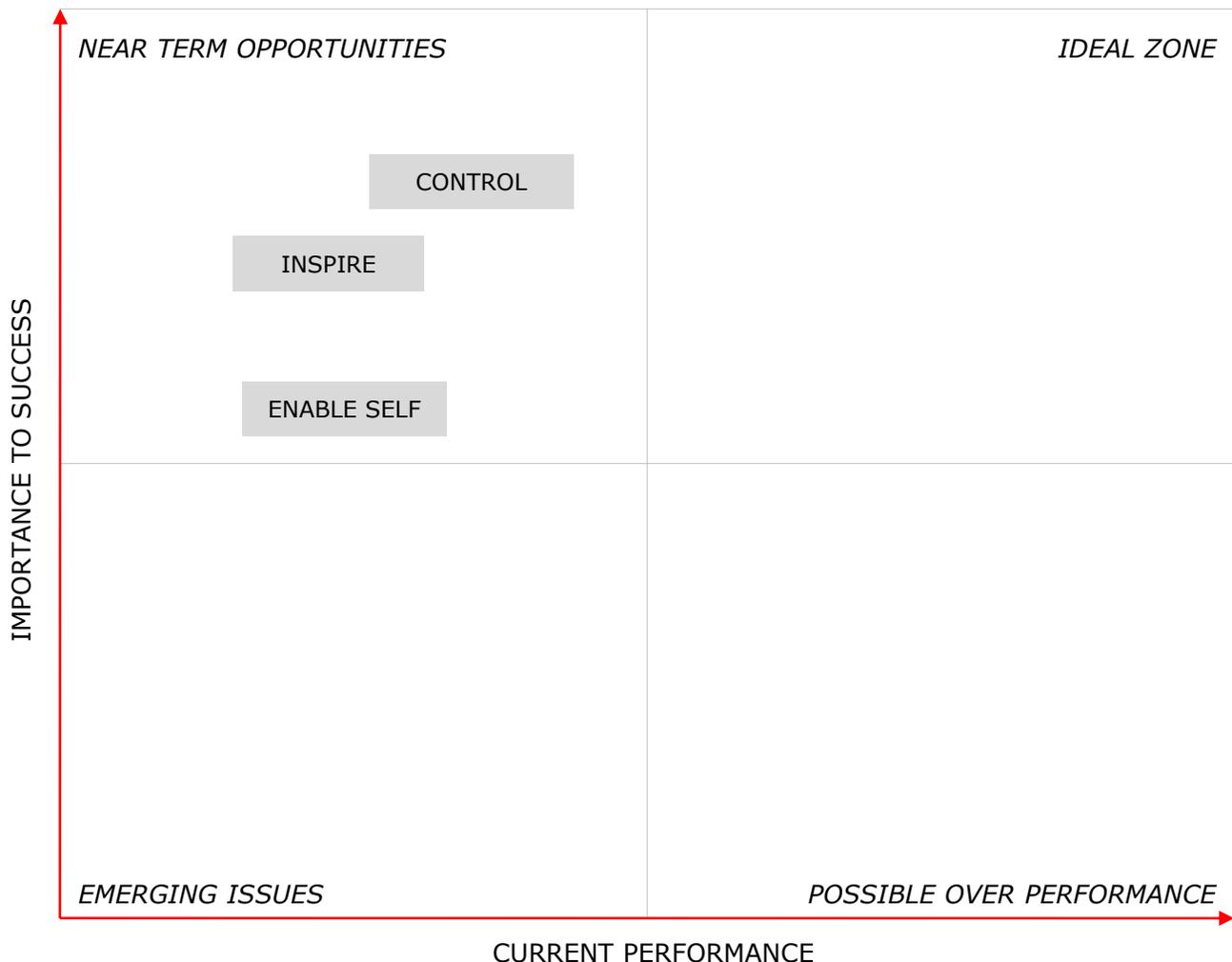
When considering the results on the profile it is important to keep two factors in mind. First, all the attributes are important. However, since resources are always constrained, the process of scaling them in terms of future importance and current performance helps prioritize activities and sharpen organizational focus. Second, it is natural for these issues to change position over time, both in terms of importance and performance. Therefore, it is helpful to regularly re-assess all four quadrants of the framework to identify necessary adjustments to organizational attention or action.
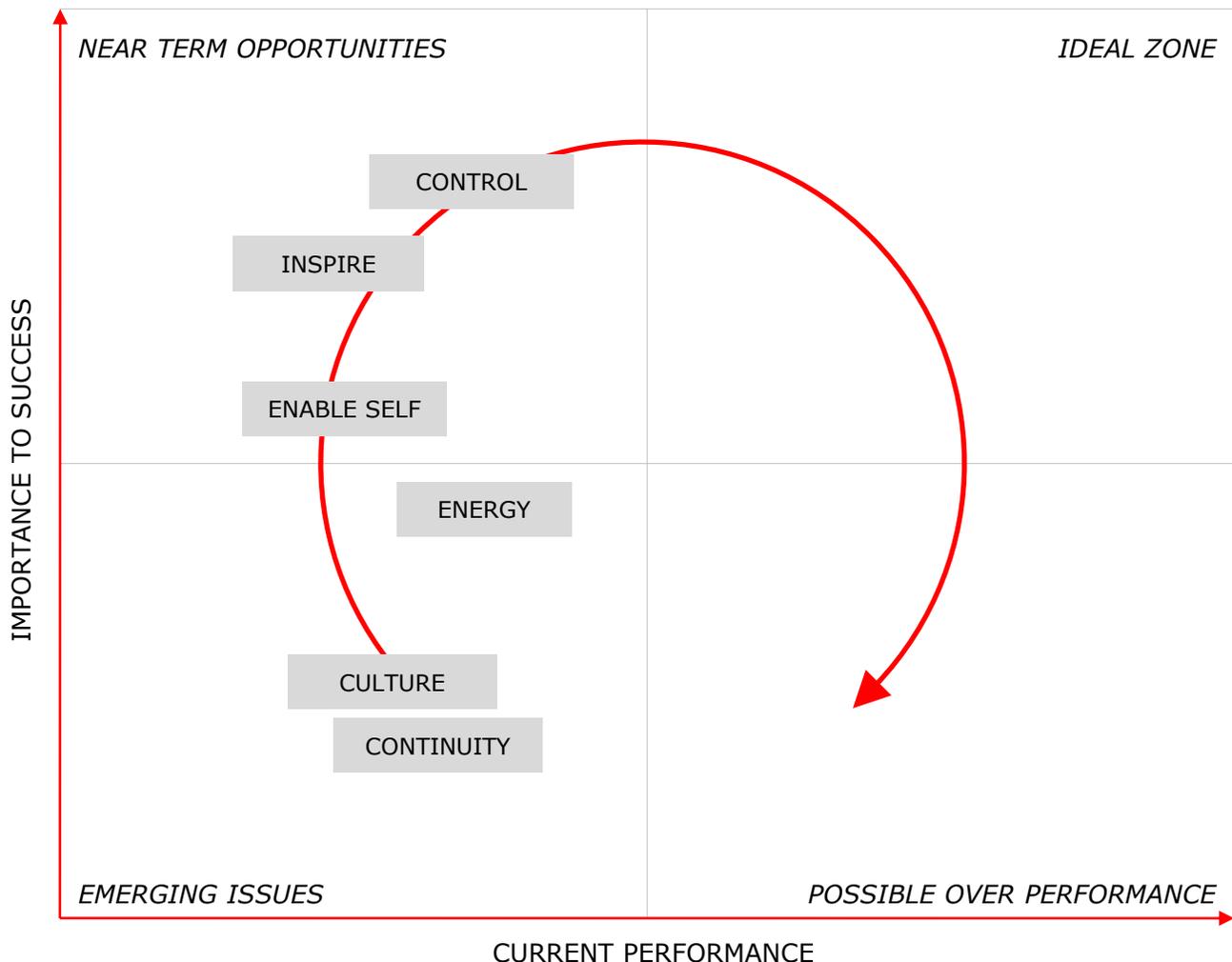
NEAR TERM OPPORTUNITIES

(High importance and low performance) This area is particularly significant since these attributes are considered very important to future success but not necessarily performing as well as preferred. Attributes in this quadrant are near-term opportunities for improvement. Sometimes called 'low hanging fruit', they are needs that are important to the near-term future and, if integrated into a longer term strategic plan, will catalyze the institution towards achievement of the future vision.
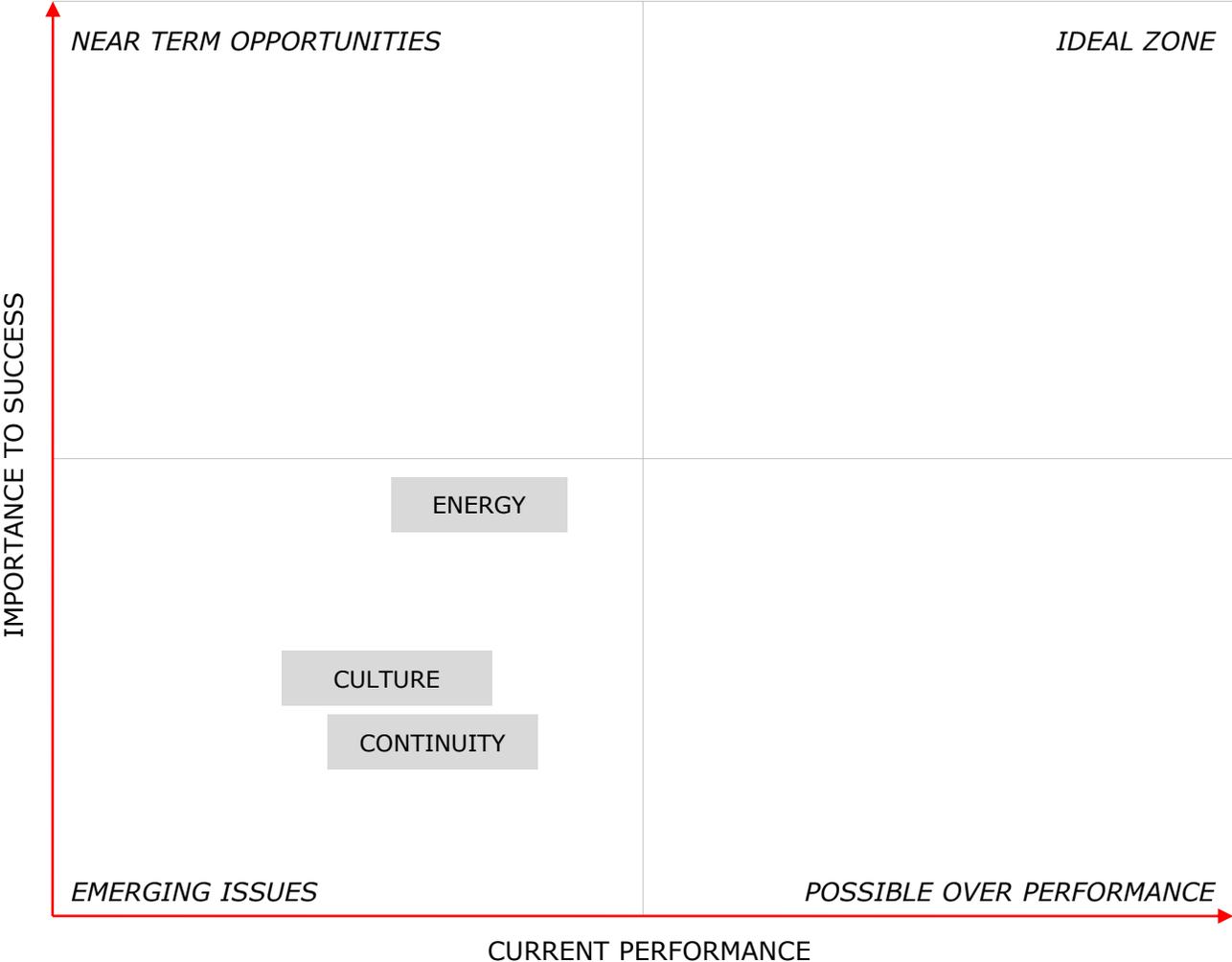
The attributes that fall into this category constituted a great deal of the open discussion during the session. For the participants, the ideal state of the renovated 2nd library floor will be an **inspiring environment that students can control** (reconfigure) to meet their individual and group needs to support self-learning. Control was defined as choice, adaptability and flexibility of library spaces.

NEAR TERM OPPORTUNITIES

IDEAL ZONE

CONTROL

INSPIRE

ENABLE SELF

IMPORTANCE TO SUCCESS

EMERGING ISSUES

POSSIBLE OVER PERFORMANCE

CURRENT PERFORMANCE

EMERGING ISSUES

(Low importance and low performance) This quadrant represents factors that are not considered as critical to the future success and are not receiving much attention. When an institution is newly forming or in a process of renewal, it is typical to have issues in this quadrant. These issues are considered **emerging** with new importance based on new directions of the group. Often attributes fall into this quadrant because they are new ideas, or are not usually associated with the facility type. Also, participants may not have much experience working or learning in environments with these attributes. But, it's important to remember that these attributes are still considered important, and should be explored in more detail in the next phase of the project.

The variable with the lowest ranking, Continuity, had a relatively high standard deviation distribution, meaning there was a low level of consensus on its importance. Based on the discussion, this attribute seemed to be of more concern to the library staff rather than students. As for Energy, although it was ranked lower than the three "near term" attributes, it had the lowest standard deviation of all variables in terms of importance, and therefore should be considered a priority.

NEAR TERM OPPORTUNITIES   *IDEAL ZONE*

IMPORTANCE TO SUCCESS

ENERGY

CULTURE

CONTINUITY

EMERGING ISSUES   *POSSIBLE OVER PERFORMANCE*
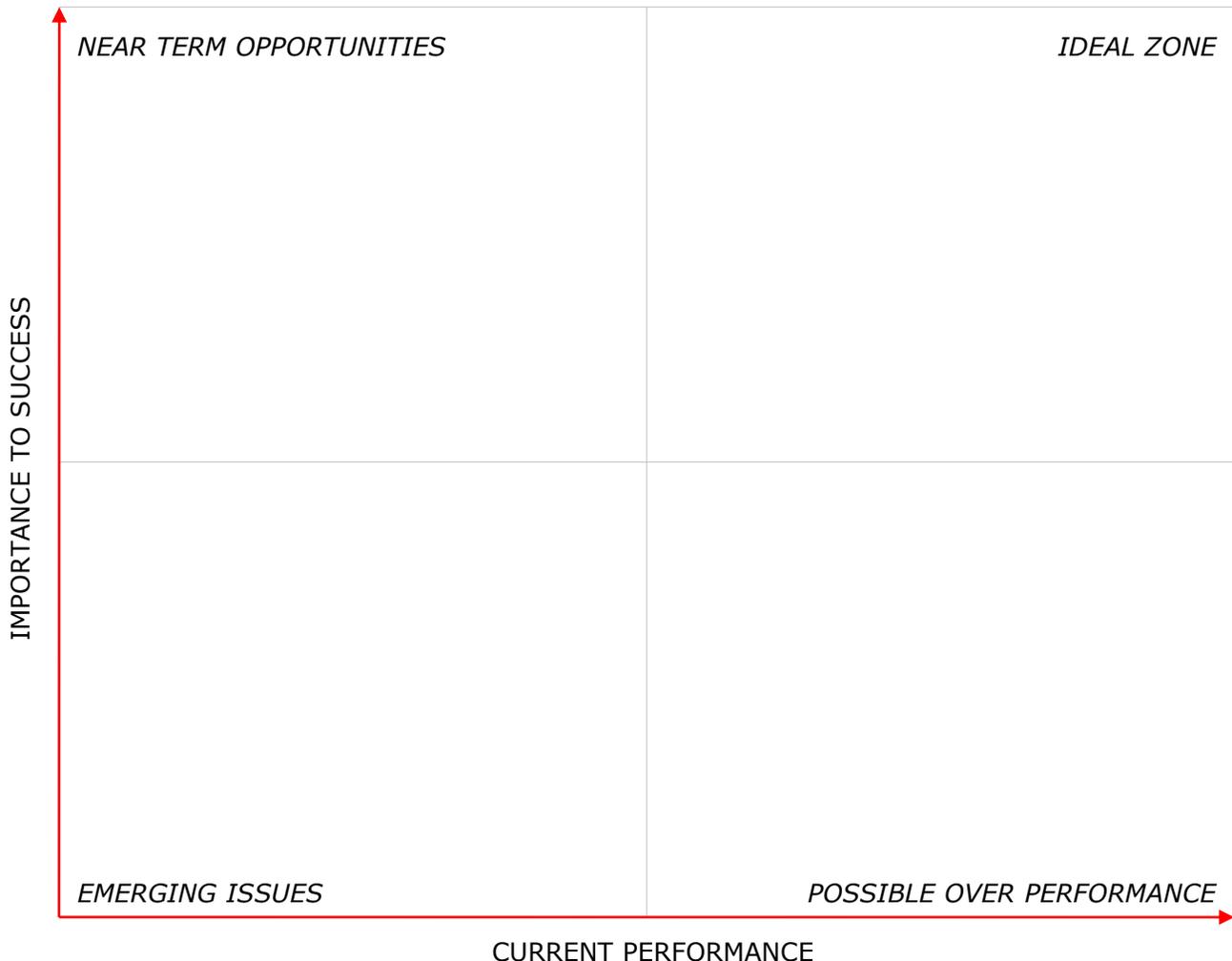
CURRENT PERFORMANCE

IDEAL ZONE and OVER PERFORMING ZONES

(High importance and high performance) Attributes that fall into this quadrant are considered both important to future success and perceived to be well supported by the organization.

(Low importance and high performance). Attributes that fall into this quadrant are include those that the organization is supporting well but may not be important to future success. The prospect may exist for re-allocating some resources to the "near term opportunity" attributes.

For this exercise there were no attributes that fell into either of these quadrants. This is usually the case when the existing facility has been targeted for renovation, because there is already a shared consensus that the existing facility is not performing as desired.

These quadrants will be important during post occupancy evaluation.

NEAR TERM OPPORTUNITIES	*IDEAL ZONE*
EMERGING ISSUES	*POSSIBLE OVER PERFORMANCE*

IMPORTANCE TO SUCCESS

CURRENT PERFORMANCE

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the voting results as well as the discussion and opinions expressed in the session, several recommendations for the design of the new 2nd floor library space emerge:

CONTROL. The high ranking of this variable suggests a space that features a robust range of space types, furniture types, and the ability for students to choose and reconfigure space easily to support their specific individual and group needs. These needs encompass group size, ability to create some level of group separation, availability of writing, display, and technology equipment, and easy access to other library resources and staff.

INSPIRE. This variable suggest an atmosphere that motivates students to discover and learn by featuring dynamic interactive displays of ongoing global and local issues and research, where students can engage with other students and faculty in real time and/or virtually, around the world. It also suggests a space where students can observe and emulate their fellow students and faculty engaged in academic discourse. The high ranking of this variable also suggest that the space be designed for future generations of students, staff and faculty who are being raised with embedded technology, social networking, and more intellectual autonomy.

ENABLE SELF. This variable overlaps the previous two – Control and Inspire – and suggests a environment that enables students to choose or adapt space in a way that will meet their specific learning style. Together, these three variables speak very strongly towards having an **inspirational, flexible, adaptable, engaging space with choices**.

ENERGY. The overall discussion pointed to a library space that is very different from the existing, with a greater sense of energy and excitement, and more opportunities for observing and participating in livelier activities. This could be accomplished through more display technology, more natural light, differentiated artificial light, more variety of settings (especially casual group settings), non-institutional furniture and fewer typical library settings (i.e. no large reference or circulation counters) more vibrant colors, background ambiance (soft background noise, coffee aroma, etc). In short, look more like Starbucks, and less like a study hall or library reading room.

CULTURE. While lower in relative importance than other attributes, there was still a desire to reflect Virginia Tech's culture and tradition. On one level, this is accomplished through use of signage, colors, logos, etc., but on a deeper level, the space should be a reflection of the academic heritage and goals of the university. One way to do this is to illustrate and celebrate accomplishments of students, faculty and alumni.

CONTINUITY. This variable developed from a discussion led mostly by library staff participants who expressed a desire that the renovated library space maintain (to some degree) its role as an information resource center for students. As stated earlier in this report, this variable had the highest standard deviation distribution, meaning there was a low level of consensus on its importance. A solution might be to think of resources not as static element, such as a reference counter, or librarian station, but more as a mobile knowledge resource, where staff moves around with mobile technology to respond to information inquiries. Other technologies, such as web-based databases, available on any wireless device can also replace some of the basic resource retrieval functions, to free up reference staff to participate more fully in academic and pedagogical discourse with students (e.g. guide on side, not sage on stage).

NEXT STEPS

Below are several options for next steps. Note that this list is not intended to be inclusive of all the steps in the overall metrics, design, development, or implementation process. These are simply potential next steps to move forward on issues that surfaced in the workshop.

Commit to ongoing engagement to facilitate change. Obtain additional perspectives and senior direction. Use key components from this report as a starting point for discussions.

Learn and educate. Seek engagement and additional information from institutional leaders and staff about key elements of the vision and attributes, their key learning issues that relate to the vision, and potential solutions. Use this discussion as an opportunity to continue educating leaders and staff on the strategic value of the physical environment.

Communicate outcomes and plans. Share this report, recommendations, and action items that result with session participants. Use ongoing participant input to clarify topic areas through dialogue, exploration, etc.

Generate and evaluate solutions. Working with your design team, explore learning environment solutions broadly by reviewing the desired attributes identified in the session and incorporating them into conceptual design. Call on your Herman Miller Strategist to support the design effort if desired.

Be realistic. After completing the exploration during the solution-generating phase, consider constraints around real estate, budget and other strategic alignment issues. Being cost-driven is smart, but remember to broaden focus to include not just near term cost savings, but also long term learning outcome and performance gains.

Measure. Measuring performance is essential for gauging project success. Success measures consist of key performance indicators related to variables such as faculty and student performance and satisfaction. A balanced scorecard identifies the current performance of these variables and establishes goals to work towards. The variables are selected based on the overall vision and goals of the project.

" If I asked my customers what they want, they simply would have said a faster horse."

Henry Ford