Case Study: Kennesaw State University English Department

Kennesaw State University’s English Department Goes for Gold in Renovation

Radhika Dharanipalan, project manager of design and construction at Kennesaw State University (KSU), recently oversaw renovations and additions to the campus’ English department.

The existing building got a facelift with all new finishes, including flooring, and several much needed spaces were added, such as a new lecture hall and classrooms, new student lounges and flexible faculty spaces.

Flooring Performance Considerations

"Like is the case in any project, we want to think about two important things," Dharanipalan explained. "One is aesthetics and the other one is function." She explored many options before deciding on three carpet tile designs from Mohawk Group.

The decision to specify carpet tile began with the product’s function. "From a facilities standpoint, we do like to use carpet tile," she said. "If we have damage in certain areas, we can replace it very easily."

The project also called for flooring that could stand up to heavy traffic with the constant flow of students in and out of classrooms and lounge spaces. "At Mohawk we are committed to developing wonderful looking products with fantastic designs but also extremely durable material," said David Dembowitz, SVP of education for Mohawk Group.

All three carpet tile designs are constructed from stain resistant nylon, which provides enhanced performance attributes. The fibers resist soiling, making the tiles easier to clean and reducing the need for harsh chemicals. The university benefits from lowered maintenance requirements, potentially leading to reduced costs over the life of the carpet.

In addition, the durable nylon fibers resist fading, crushing and matting for improved appearance retention. Because the tiles will look better longer, replacement can be prolonged, ultimately reducing costs for the university.

Flooring Follows Function

Although the carpet tile designs were chosen for their aesthetics, space planning was also top of mind for Dharanipalan. “When we had a circulation space, we tried to carve out pockets where we could have lounge seating. We used the Mohawk Group carpet tile with the accent color in those spaces, so that we clearly defined those spaces.”

Bright swaths of yellow draw students into the lounge areas, echoed in the Hyper Earth carpet tiles as well as in furniture accents and even in paint for feature walls. Dharanipalan and her team configured the tiles so the yellow accents create large squares around Statement Stone insets from the Iconic Earth collection, adding graphic interest as well as splashes of color in the spaces.
The carpet tiles offer much more than basic color blocking for space delineation. Inspired by biophilic design concepts which have been shown to increase connection and creativity and encourage social interaction, they are perfect for areas where students and faculty will congregate.

Carpet tile was installed in the classrooms as well. The striated grays in Drifted Ground from the Iconic Earth collection provide a calming, neutral backdrop more conducive to focused work. The soft grays also coordinate with the modern perforated metal bases of the desks.

“It’s all about supporting the learning environment,” Dembowitz says. “A good facility director is trying to build or renovate the facility to improve student performance—that’s the ultimate outcome.”

University Branding

Branding has become increasingly important to colleges and universities as they vie for student enrollment. “Higher education is a business,” Dembowitz explains. “Now they’re competing for top talent, so design plays a big role, helping to promote school pride and school spirit.”

Dharanipalan agrees. “I think that’s really something important to consider because when you’re thinking about a project, it’s not just rooms that you’re delivering. You’re delivering a space that has to have personality. There’s really an opportunity for you to try and do something that’s fun, and that’s creative.”

Rather than a literal interpretation with bold stripes of the KSU Owls’ iconic gold and black, Dharanipalan softened the school colors, incorporating subtler yellow and grays throughout the building. “I try to bring in the school colors, not just in the flooring but the project in general, through accent walls and little touches on furniture.”

Dembowitz points out that branding spaces with school colors—even in subtler tones—can help to reinforce personal connections to the school and bolster retention of both students and faculty.

The KSU English department now provides dynamic spaces that invite interaction and collaboration among its occupants. Dharanipalan and her team conceived the design thoughtfully, inspiring students and faculty to do their best work, while also acting as good stewards of university resources.

Dembowitz says, “We are so happy and excited to be part of this space on KSU’s campus.”