

Spark G45: Teaching in the Round

DENISE YOST: I love it.

KARA WHITMAN: I love it.

CAROL KAWULA: My experience has been great. I have grown to really love teaching in this building.

DENISE YOST: I think, at first, there was some hesitation, especially seeing that room for the first time, even as it was being built. There was definitely buzz among instructors, like wow, this looks cool, and how might I teach in here?

KARA WHITMAN: It's taken some time to figure out how to utilize the space to the best of its abilities, or best of my abilities. And I'm still learning. But it's definitely my favorite.

CAROL KAWULA: This classroom, something about the way it's set up, the back row of chairs is, maybe, 12 inches higher than where I am in the center of it. And it does not feel that big.

KARA WHITMAN: I love having three different input screens. And I try and use them all every class, so one input for my lecture, one input for an activity, and then one for the overhead projector so that I can be writing things.

DENISE YOST: We also have the rolling white boards, which we can use for group settings, when they're brainstorming stuff, and then sharing it back out to the group.

KARA WHITMAN: Change where I'm looking, I change which screen I'm-- if I'm using a laser pointer, I change which screen I'm pointing at regularly.

And other students can actually see students. So if they're raising their hand, I can tell people are looking that direction. And let's all move that direction. So it's pretty easy to see if someone has a question, just requires that I move around a lot more and not stay behind the podium.

CAROL KAWULA: The great thing about that room is, you can really hear students ask a question. And the hard part is, your back is always to someone. But I am roaming around. If I had on my Fitbit, I probably put a lot of steps in.

DENISE YOST: The TAs are instrumental in my classroom. And they're really my eyes, because I need eyes 360. Practicing that 360 presence is really important as the instructor. But also, the TAs and classmates will point out, hey, there's someone behind you or across the room.

KARA WHITMAN: Everyone can see me. They can all hear me. I can get to all the students easily.

CAROL KAWULA: That room is just really conducive for students to just roll over and talk to the person next to them or behind them.

DENISE YOST: It creates a different learning environment just by the way things are arranged, the way you use the tools. And I think it really takes away some of the hierarchy that is set up in classroom, so that it's more welcoming for students.

CAROL KAWULA: I'll be excited if I get to teach here again. It's just a really-- I mean, it's a new building. Everything is new and beautiful. And the lighting is great. And so, it's kind of an honor to get to teach here. I've enjoyed it.