

RFP for space in Uris Hall

The vision for Uris Hall shared with the faculty in March of 2021 noted that Uris would be developed in such a way as to create “a true commons for the Arts and Sciences” at the center of the Morningside campus. The March 2021 plan builds upon years of faculty discussions culminating in the 2019 report of the Uris Visioning Committee led by Maya Tolstoy and Jean Howard.¹

Two transformational commitments announced in May of 2021—\$40M from a devoted College alumni family, and \$40M from President Bollinger—will allow us to renovate the base and the tower of the building and to do so ambitiously.

This RFP is devoted to the priorities articulated in the March 2021 plan, aiming to realize them in specific ways that will amplify Columbia’s innovation and intellectual excellence. The creativity of faculty in responding to this call will shape the building’s impact for years to come.

Proposals for this RFP are due on October 1. For a note on spaces opened by moves to Uris and a summary of the space plans to date, please see the relevant sections at the end of this RFP.

Space and Use Types for the Open RFP

Space on the second floor of the building (depending on redesign, this could range from about 6K to 10K square feet) has been reserved for uses to be determined through this open RFP process. These spaces are meant to promote new ideas and initiatives or to enhance existing units by setting them in new space. Naturally suited to office configurations, they might also be reconfigured to create more open floorplans or larger classrooms and meeting spaces. They include spaces on the periphery of the building as well as spaces at the center of the floorplate. Current configurations show clusters of offices fitting groupings ranging from 2 to 10, as well as some open interior spaces, seminar/meeting rooms, and informal, small-scale social space. While these types of spaces may be exactly what is wanted, the new funding for the building makes reconfiguration something we can consider in response to the proposals.

Intellectual Aims for the RFP

This RFP aims to provide space for faculty-generated research projects and/or existing interdisciplinary units that engage participants from multiple disciplines on topics at the leading edge of academic inquiry.

New projects would, in effect, become collaboratories on topics of broad consequence across disciplines. Research groups of faculty from several departments or units could propose projects with a life-span of multiple years. Ideas identified in Arts and Sciences or center and institute strategic plans--such as computation and culture, molecular architecture from molecules to

¹ These reports can be read in full on the A&S website, as originally presented to the faculty for feedback: [Uris Vision Document](#); [March 2021 Response](#).

devices, or the nature of the social contract in the twenty-first century—may be ripe for development in this space. Such collaborations would mark the Arts and Sciences as a national leader in the production of emerging knowledge across disciplines.

Proposals could come from any members of the Arts and Sciences' faculty and might include postdoctoral fellows, graduate students, and undergraduates in their development and execution.

Existing academic units at Columbia that already produce multi-disciplinary, boundary-crossing knowledge are also covered by this RFP. Proposals from such units should show how the move would allow them to re-invigorate their efforts and drive close collaboration with expected and potential new partners—from units both within and outside the building.

Criteria for Selection

Strong proposals will show creativity, innovation, and a practical plan for implementing the proposers' aspirations. They will embody some or all of the criteria below (or suggest newly compelling rationales not anticipated by them), and will present a vision for how the proposed use will expand the significance and impact of Uris as a center for Arts and Sciences as a whole.

Criteria:

- The proposed use demonstrates intellectual vision and innovation, commitment from faculty and students, and the potential to benefit a significant community within or beyond Arts and Sciences.
- The space requested will transform, for the better, the work proposed to be done there.
- The space will be well-used, bringing students and faculty together regularly throughout the day, week, and year.
- The space will build community intentionally and inclusively.
- The proposed use of space will generate new connections that will expand or deepen the existing intellectual networks of A&S in positive ways.
- The proposed use advances core Arts and Sciences commitments beyond research and teaching excellence, such as fostering diversity and a welcoming climate.
- The proposed use lends itself well to the basic character of the Uris space, which is not suited to the conduct of scientific work beyond computation, theory, or behavioral research.
- Using Uris space instead of the unit's or proposer's current footprint (if there is one) will leave behind useful space that can be repurposed to allow additional benefits for other units and for A&S as a whole.
- Proposed project can be supported through pre-existing funding (or funding to be raised through grant applications, etc.)

Proposal details

Proposals should include:

1. Narrative proposal of up to 5 pages, addressing the criteria above as well as other significant benefits that would come from the proposed use of the space
2. One-page budget detailing any financial resources that can be committed to renovation, furnishing, use, or upkeep of the space imagined; if none, please simply note this on the budget page.
3. Brief budget for the project proposed (if applicable; projects currently unfunded should specify whether the locating in Uris requires the commitment of ongoing program funds and if so, what the source of these would be.)
4. Outline of the space requested and any special features that would be required. This need not be overly detailed unless the use proposed has very particular specifications that, if they cannot be met exactly, would make the proposal moot. (For instance: “2-3 small offices, 1 common social space with capacity for about 15 people”; “a large windowless room suitable for motion-capture equipment”; “an open workspace with an adjoining breakout room to seat 5-8 people”; “5-7 shared offices or cubicles suitable for collaborative research”)
5. Brief bio of proposer or proposers or profile of the existing unit, not to exceed one paragraph for each individual or unit.

Proposals are due on October 1, 2021. Please send these in PDF form to Rose Razaghian, Dean of Academic Planning and Governance (rr222@columbia.edu). Decisions will be made by senior leadership in A&S in consultation with the PPC, by early November. Divisional deans are available to consult with prospective proposers to discuss and refine their ideas in advance.

Space Opened By Moves to Uris

This RFP is for Uris spaces only. When units are ready to move into Uris, in 3+ years depending upon the speed of the renovation, Arts and Sciences will need to consider the best uses for the spaces left behind; these will be available in 3-5 years, depending on the degree of renovation needed before they are repurposed.

This significant time delay is occasioned by the large-scale renovation made possible in Uris by the extraordinary financial commitments of President Bollinger and our naming donors. The faculty and decanal leadership of Arts and Sciences will consider how to use spaces vacated by those moving into Uris--including any space vacated as a result of this RFP process--in about 2 years' time. This allows time for new ideas and conditions to evolve and for consensus to build around our most pressing needs. Proposals not able to be accommodated in this RFP will automatically be considered as part of that subsequent discussion.

Overview of Space Plans to Date

The plans for Uris laid out in March 2021 included specific allocations of space for basic priorities, among them common space, gathering space, library and café space, and academic anchor space.

It is essential to note that these spaces were outlined and assessed before we received the transformational commitments totaling \$80M. At that time, we were simply repurposing the

current floor plan with a few investment areas to improve common classroom and gathering space.

The significant renovation funds will enable greater changes than anticipated to the configuration of the floors in the base and the tower. We may be able to use space more efficiently throughout the building so that more square footage can be allotted the priorities of common space and classroom space articulated by the Vision Committee's 2019 report and reaffirmed in March of 2021. These changes may also have a positive impact on how much space can be allocated through this RFP process. The RFP might prioritize a set of proposals this fall and hold others in reserve in hopes of being able to house more academic groups through better use of space in the design process that will unfold in 2022.

The outline below depended on only a few targeted renovations—namely, to create more classroom and gathering space on the 200 and 200M levels. It should be considered conditional on the design process.

- **Base:** In the base—the first three levels of the building--the library space, café, and gathering space remain true to their basic purpose as shared goods for students and faculty.
- **Common gathering and classroom space:** Also remaining true to current use are the existing classrooms in Uris, which occupy the 300 level, with the addition of some classrooms that can be recovered from fragmented space on the 200 level and may be created in the library/A&S shared space on 200M.
- **A&S/Library Space:** A detailed vision for the spaces at the intersection of the library and A&S space on the 100 (first floor) and 200M (mezzanine) levels is currently under development by a joint A&S faculty and library staff committee led by Jean Howard, George Delacorte Professor of the Humanities in the Department of English, and Ann Thornton, Vice Provost and University Librarian. This committee is conducting broad faculty consultation and is working with a professional consultant to create the intellectual concept that will drive space configuration at the design stage.
- **Academic Anchor space:** An open call to departments in spring of 2021 invited bids for a move to Uris's academic anchor space. That process concluded with the PPC's consideration and recommendations on the four applicants that made proposals. The PPC recommendation was accepted by senior A&S leadership, resulting in the assignment of three departments—Statistics, African American and African Diaspora Studies, and Psychology—to the Uris tower, the suite that is currently the dean's office on the 100 level, and a section on the 200 level. Following the existing layout of the 200 level, about 1/3 of the second floor—mainly interior space--was earmarked for spillover from the two departments occupying the tower (Statistics and Psychology). We hope for more efficiency in this space given the opportunity for significant reconfiguration enabled by the gift.