

**SUMMARY OF CLASSROOM DESIGN SURVEY
SPRING 2005**

SURVEY DESIGNED AND CONDUCTED BY CLASSROOM DESIGN COMMITTEE

In Spring 2005 the Classroom Committee conducted an online survey to begin to assess general patterns of classroom space needs relative to the various styles of teaching currently being used. Response to this survey was excellent, with a total of 97 different faculty completing the questionnaire.

What kinds of teaching methods/styles do they most frequently use? To assess the full range of styles/methods presently in use, faculty were asked to check as many as apply. Although the overwhelming majority of faculty clearly rely at some point during a course on the lecture and discussion, most actually reported using a fairly wide range of different teaching methods, including opportunities for hands-on practice, seminar, studio, small group and mixed methods. (See Table A) *The mean number of different methods per faculty in fact was 3.89.*

TABLE A

Lecture	77	79.4%
Discussion	72	74.4%
Small groups	62	63.9%
Seminar	52	53.6%
Mixed	47	48.5%
Other	19	19.6%

What kinds of room arrangements work best for the course(s) they teach? Although faculty were asked to check as many as apply (which allowed them to clearly indicate if a particular style was ever suitable) less than half (46.4%) indicated that the best arrangement was a room with tablet armchairs in rows. Given that the default arrangement in most of the classrooms at Nazareth College is the table armchair in rows, this finding suggests that the majority of faculty are teaching with a classroom arrangement not ideally suited to their specific pedagogical needs and goal. A somewhat more frequently preferred arrangement (50.5%) was a room arranged for small groups with tables and chairs. (See Table B) Those whose preferred teaching space that did not fit into the listed types indicated either: 1) the need for specialized space (such as a studio), or 2) the need for a room that can be easily converted from one arrangement to another.

TABLE B

Small groups with table and chairs	49	50.5%
Rows of tablet armchairs	45	46.4%
Large group with table and chairs	33	34.0%
Computer labs	20	20.6%
Other	18	18.6%
No preference	2	2.1%

Have faculty generally been scheduled to teach in classrooms suited to the methods/style of instruction they will use? Although most faculty (60.8%) reported they had generally been scheduled in a room suited to their teaching needs, a sizable proportion (35.1%) indicated that this did not happen regularly but often required making a special request. Further, for those who had encountered conflicts, several clear patterns in the nature of the conflict they had experienced became evident. The first and by far the most obvious was that of physical overcrowding that prevented flexible use of the space (53.8%). Smartrooms seemed especially problematic in that many apparently created a classroom context that lacked flexibility and stood in the way of more interactive forms of teaching. A common frustration was with technology stations that dominated the room.

Interestingly, the next most common complaint also had to do with the layout and arrangements of smartrooms. Namely, roughly a quarter of those who taught in smartrooms (25.6%) indicated they had encountered problems with the layout and integration of the computers with the other types of teaching visuals (i.e., whiteboards, blackboards, overheads). The key complaint was that the layout and arrangement prevented faculty from using more than one form of visual instruction at a time, which imposed a static quality on a course. The remaining complaints focused on general maintenance (12.8%), poorly designed non-technology components such as chairs (10.3%), and technology equipment that had not been maintained (2.6%).

When planning to teach with technology and scheduled to teach in a smart room, most faculty indicated that they had found the design of these smartrooms functional (62.8%). However, it is also significant that more than a third (37.2%) had not. Here again, placement became an issue with many faculty (51.3%) voicing complaints about the layout and arrangement of equipment and inadequate or poorly maintained equipment. Finally, another relatively small (15.4%) but fairly articulate group expressed a need for more flexible thinking about the use of technology as an aide to teaching and learning. The desire expressed was to occasionally use technology for specific pedagogical goals without being locked into the rigidity of a smart classroom. The request was to have portable technology as an option for those who wished to include it on an as needed basis.

Other survey questions were limited to those who had ***taught in GAC*** (43.3%). Surprisingly, roughly one third (35.3%) indicated that the classrooms they had been assigned in GAC had been consistently ***appropriate to their teaching methods/style*** and a small but significant proportion (14.3%) indicated that none of the classroom they had been scheduled for in GAC had been appropriate for their pedagogical needs. As explanation for what had gone wrong, most faculty referenced their comments in the earlier sections about flexibility, crowding, and poorly designed placement of teaching elements. But in addition to the issues outlined above, several new complaints emerged that seemed to be specific to GAC. Among these were spaces where ventilation and noise (from the kitchen ventilation system) were a problem.