Mary Idema Pew Library Learning and Information Commons
Allendale, MI

A model for the new learning environment, the Mary Idema Pew Library Learning and Information Commons is a student and user focused design, highlighting concepts of retail, exhibition, and interactive and immersive technologies. To achieve this new model, the designers investigated social patterns of group work, casual/serendipitous work and formal work. The resulting design provides a variety of learning and interaction spaces: individual, large, and small group study and instructional spaces, bibliographic training and social interaction spaces such as a café.

This 150,000 SF landmark building is seeking the highest LEED level certification and replaces the original award-winning James H. Zumberge Library, built in 1968. The siting and design of the new library focuses on sustainable concepts, including building orientation, a green roof, material selection, and natural lighting. The building is located along the main campus axis, framing the clock tower, a campus icon, creating a strong public plaza for student gathering and social events.

During the visioning and planning phase of this project, designers teamed with the furniture manufacturer and GVSU to perform primary research to test and study how students interacted in new conceptual interactive learning environments. The results of this research allowed our design team to analyze data that revealed patterns of student behavior, thus allowing us to form design principles that respond to the needs of today’s student.