An incomparable vision to make things better forms the foundation of this facility. The purpose of advancing the state of human-kind fortifies every element of its design. This is an environment where things will happen that have never happened before. This is a bridge to the extraordinary. This is the Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery.
Southwest view of the Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery along Campus Drive on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus.
Home to the private, non-profit Morgridge Institute for Research and the public Wisconsin Institute for Discovery, the Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery is designed to foster crucial interaction between public and private research that transcends discipline-to-discipline, lab-to-lab and mind-to-mind boundaries. Collaboration, interaction and community are its cornerstones. Breakthrough research across the fields of biology, information technology and engineering – vital to advancing human health – will come to life here.

This unique public/private initiative is made possible by a gift from John and Tashia Morgridge, matched by the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation (WARF) and the State of Wisconsin. Their remarkable three-way partnership is dedicated to breaking down walls and opening the way for the brightest minds to discover the positive power of interdisciplinary research and collaboration. Public engagement, educational outreach and sustainability are key to the design. Every aspect of the building is a teaching tool and an inspiring experiment in the positive potential of human connectivity. This combination of public and private not only brings all together – researchers, teachers, university, community, local and global – but makes sure all work together toward advancing human health.
Located in the heart of the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus, the Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery is surrounded by the key disciplines that need to come together for great discovery to happen. It is within easy walking distance of schools and colleges that bring critical perspectives and viewpoints to the scientific research that takes place in the building. It provides a lively meeting space for campus and community activities. Situated at a natural juncture between the northern and southern campus, the building persuades people to stop in, spend time and interact with others. This location, along with the design of the building itself, creates the ideal place for collaboration. Based on factors that construct a “collaboration continuum” (factors such as cooperation, coordination, coexistence, disciplinary, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary), the Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery is perfectly situated from physical, intellectual and emotional standpoints to champion world-class collaboration.
DESIGN THAT DOTS THE I’S AND CROSSES THE T’S OF COLLABORATION

Everything is explored and considered to make sure this place and space delivers on the promise of collaboration and research leading to a better world.

- Three levels of basic research space and communicating stairs bring people together.
- Straight halls are non-existent; spaces are flexibly open to encourage interaction and accommodate collaboration.
- Common areas invite large and small group discussion and discovery.
- Wired to fully power interaction, technology flows through the building.

Smart boards, living walls and flat screens are close at hand.

Labs can be wet or dry to match research needs.

Researchers can meet in dining areas for lunch, coffee and seminars or reflect in the Winter Garden and Summer Terrace.

The horizontal versus vertical design commands a spirit of collaboration.
THE TOWN CENTER BUILDS COMMUNITY AND VIBRANT, FLEXIBLE INTERACTION

Strategically located on the main ground floor, the “Town Center” convenes and catalyzes. It reflects the Wisconsin Idea in action – the vision that the University of Wisconsin exists to create knowledge and social interaction to better the lives of all state citizens for the greater good. Suited for both formal and informal gatherings, this is the setting for symposia, entrepreneurial clinics, performances and meetings. It is a place where the greater community can meet with scientists informally to learn about their work and discoveries. The Town Center’s Forum is a superflex zone where walls retract upward and space opens or contracts according to the needs of presentations, exhibitions, conferences and breakouts. Versatile consulting space addresses the desire for business clinics, mini offices and think tanks. Discovery zones invite all ages to come face-to-face with science in a vibrant setting. The Town Center not only satisfies the hunger for connection, but hunger in general with a restaurant, cafe and soda fountain. In fact, all four entrances to the building feature food, drink and refreshing retail choices. Welcoming everyone, there is no “back door.”
CAFE is a casual spot to chat, work, and gather; it is a throwback to the drugstore that formerly occupied the site.

CLINIC SPACE serves as a multi-use area for researchers and entrepreneurs to consult with students from the law and business schools.

BREAKOUT ROOMS are ideal spaces for break-out discussions that accompany forum programs.

SODA FOUNTAIN serves as a no-stress venue for family visits; it is a reminder of the Rennebohm’s Drug Store that formerly occupied the site.

LIVING ROOM offers comfortable and welcoming furniture to encourage people to linger in a space that feels more like home.

CASUAL MEETING SPACES provide a comfortable, informal setting for gathering, discussing, and planned events.

WINTER GARDENS provide a year-round connection to nature through interior trees and water walls that create a quiet reflective space.

The FORUM, a flat-floor high-tech lecture and presentation space, can seat 300 people and can be retracted to open the space to the Town Center.

Cafe is a casual spot to chat, work, and gather; it is a throwback to the drugstore that formerly occupied the site.

DISCOVERY NICHES are interactive, hands-on kiosks that highlight work on the research floors, bringing the science into view for the public.

RESTAURANT provides fine dining in a friendly, welcoming environment that encourages gatherings among colleagues and partners with colleagues and friends.

View of the Town Center at the South Atrium, offering public space for casual meetings.

GROUND FLOOR
TOWN CENTER AND FORUM
The Forum is a flat floor auditorium arranged “in the round” in the center of the main floor and public space. Its tables, chairs and wall are moveable to flex with the needs of many types of events.
Research floors offer lounges, seminar rooms, offices, workstations and changeable laboratory “pods” that become topic-linked research neighborhoods.

A BREAKTHROUGH BLUEPRINT FROM BOTTOM TO TOP AND BEYOND

The ground, second, third and fourth floors offer scientists secure, flexible laboratory, office and work environments designed to inspire collaboration and breakthrough research.
DRAWS house popular shared resources, such as coffee machines, kitchenettes, copy machines, office supply storage and internal bulletin boards, to prompt frequent interactions among colleagues.

CHANGEABLE RESEARCH LABS can be easily configured and changed to meet wet or dry research needs. Each “pod” will become a topic-linked research neighborhood.

RESEARCHER LOUNGE provides scientists a space to stay close to their labs and offices but get away to relax and meet in a more comfortable setting.

DINING/CONFERENCE SPACE

RESEARCH ASSISTANT WORKSTATIONS are configured to allow both interaction and privacy for R.A.’s and post-docs. Daylight passes through translucent glass atop workstations, which exceed standard campus size.

AREAS FOR SMALL GROUP INTERACTIONS

COMMUNICATING STAIRS are designed for visual openness and comfortable chance conversations, three sets of glass and user-operable shades contain circulation between floors.

EMBEDDED TEACHING LABS, designed as “dream” collaborative teaching environments with unique and engaging features, are located on floors 2, 3 and 4. They will host a wide range of education programs for K-12 and college students, science teachers and the public.

SEMINAR ROOMS, providing private seminar and conference areas, can be reserved online by all building residents. Screens mounted outside each room allow instant access for scheduling, including on-the-spot reservations.

NO LONG STRAIGHT HALLWAYS

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GREEN SPACES COME NATURALLY AND GREEN STANDARDS RULE THROUGHOUT

The Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery sets a new standard in sustainability for university research centers. It uses 50% less energy and water than the next newest research facility on campus. Each computer terminal has its own energy usage monitor. Solar energy and geothermal technology are employed to reduce the building’s energy load on the power grid. Four eco-zones at each corner of the building reflect landscapes of Wisconsin. Healthy and locally grown food is prepared and served in the institutes’ restaurant, which embraces sustainability practices.

The building is dedicated to the key sustainability baseline initiatives of integrative design, reduced energy use via HVAC and electrical systems, reduced water use and actionable concern for public good, materials conservation and occupant health. From exterior envelope technologies, atria thermodynamics, reduced air change rates and control systems adjusting ventilation air volumes to lighting controls for daylight harvesting, high efficiency lighting and water flow fixtures, storm flow irrigation of plantings to bicycle-friendly facilities and recycling on all fronts – the dream to be green is real here.
OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENTS

Orchard Street along the east side of the institutes becomes a tree-lined, pedestrian-friendly route with one-way vehicle traffic. Special paving marks this as a special street. A water feature, WiFi access, large stones for seating and generous bicycle parking distinguish this as the “official entrance” of this 360-degree building with no back door. Landscaping designed to represent eco-zones found across Wisconsin buffers the exterior of the facility from street traffic.
Can buildings advance the state of humankind? They can if they reflect a vision to make things better. They can if they are unlike anything ever built before, and create an environment for things to happen that have never happened before. They can if they serve as bridges to the extraordinary. The Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery is such a building. Not just bridging the gap between disciplines, but removing what divides us altogether is its purpose. Bringing out great science and discovery, enriched by the arts and humanities, is its passion. A healthier world is its ultimate benefit.