

HAWORTH

# Watt Family Innovation Center

January 2017

**Case Study**  
Clemson University

**Location**  
Clemson, South Carolina

**Project Type**  
Campus Building

**Design Firms**  
Perkins + Will, Atlanta

**Dealer Partner**  
PMC Commercial Interiors

**Photographer**  
Dave Burk





Challenge

How do you create a space that sparks innovation and provides the right environment for learning in the 21st century?

## Overview

Founded in 1889, Clemson is a top-25 public university with a reputation for its dedication to teaching, research, and service. Flexibility, transparency, and accessibility are the foundational principles that drove the Watt Family Innovation Center design. This agile, high-tech environment allows cross-disciplinary teams of students, faculty, and industry partners to come together and take ideas from concept to reality.

The space focuses on students first—supporting the way they learn and providing the latest technology for creativity and experimentation. The state-of-the-art Watt Family Innovation Center is dedicated to inspiring and developing talented visionaries—utilizing the space for teaching and research in science, technology, and engineering—to build a more prosperous and brighter future for our communities.

## Specifications



- Area: 70,000 sq. ft.
- Stories: 3 floors
- Bonus Feature: Roll-up garage door

### Objective

Create a place where innovation could happen without the constraints of traditional classroom spaces and resources.

### Solution

Design an Organic Workspace that flexes for team collaboration, embraces change, and adapts for the future.

### Results

A highly flexible building that provides space for cross-functional collaboration and interdisciplinary engagement.

## Objective

# Innovation Without Constraint

Clemson created a place where innovation could happen without the constraints of traditional classroom spaces and resources—one that flexes for team collaboration needs and adapts for the future. The Watt Family Innovation Center demonstrates Clemson’s academic enterprise in action, putting current students’ needs first while also attracting the next generation of prospective innovators.

“You can solve more complex problems many times in an ad hoc way than utilizing a very structured process. We recognized how important this approach was for our students and made their needs the primary criteria for designing the Center.”

**Dr. Charles Watt**  
Executive Director  
Watt Family Innovation Center

## Visionary Founder

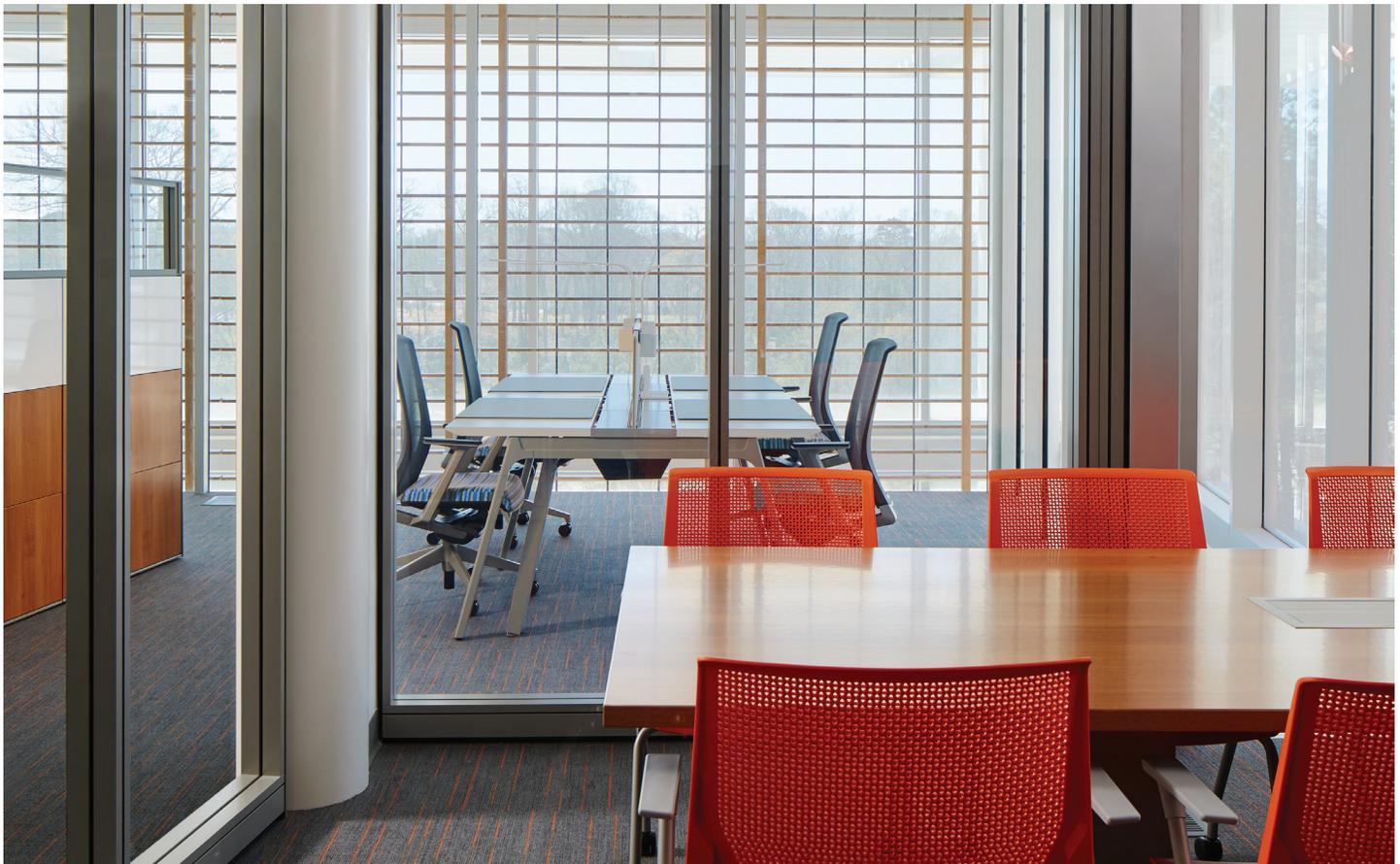
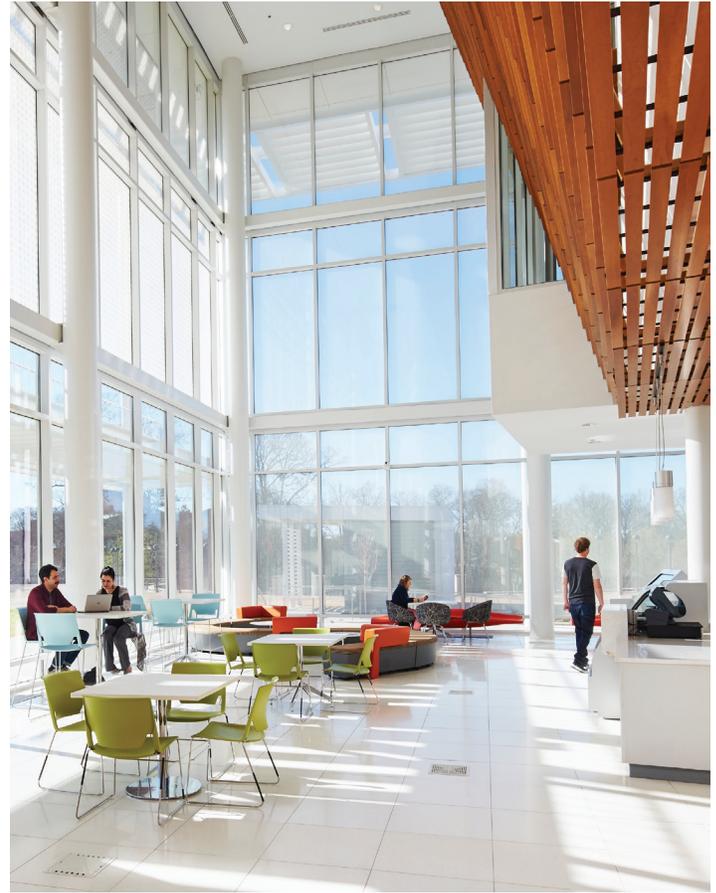
The visionary behind the project understands the value in enabling serendipitous interactions.



“The university wanted a facility that was about the students, not just a particular college or department within a university, but a university resource where students could come together, interact with one another, interact with faculty, interact with industry partners and work on their ideas.”

**Floyd Cline**

Senior Associate with Perkins + Will  
Project Manager, Watt Family Innovation Center



## Flexibility as Key to Design

The primary driver of the building design was the need for flexibility and space agility. Haworth suggests an “organic” metaphor as a process for creating, managing, and maintaining space. The organic metaphor is that of a living thing, with internal systems that adapt in response to environmental changes. The design team embraced this strategy and concept when developing the Watt Innovation Center for learning.

The demountable walls provide the transparency required to help achieve the vision for the space—to create a place where students are inspired. From the moment they enter the building, students have a view into the engineering classrooms, the auditorium, and the project labs. That visual access perpetuates high energy, bringing inspiration to the broader student population.

“One of the goals was to have mobile and flexible architecture and furniture components. As program needs change, these components could serve those ever-changing needs of the users.”

**Cathy Bunn**  
Project Architect  
Perkins + Will

### Furniture Plays an Important Role in Flexibility

Most of the furniture is on wheels. The tables flip up and can be rolled to different areas of the space. Dry erase writing surfaces allow for impromptu creativity and information sharing.





Technology is key for nurturing innovation and collaboration in 21st century learning environments. “The university is making a large commitment to technology rich buildings because that’s what students want and need—that’s how they’re thinking, learning, and working,” said Cline.

While their primary purpose is to facilitate circulation, corridors also create spaces for teaming opportunities—both formal collaboration and informal gatherings. They were designed to be wider than usual, with walls that include technology to accommodate multiple functions so students can easily access the audio-visual components or work from their laptops in the lounge areas.

“I believe that the elements characterized by and utilized in this building are those that define our future. Even more than defining—they are essential. We have to solve problems in a dimension that we did not before.”

**Dr. Charles Watt**  
Executive Director  
Watt Family Innovation Center



“I think a distinctive nature of the building is that it offers so many ways for expression and creativity. It’s really opening us up to a whole new way of looking at education. We wanted to create an environment that doesn’t dictate how to be used. People can learn how to best apply it to their educational needs, allowing it morph as the university and higher education morph.”

**Dennis Lester**  
Associate Director for Science and Technology  
Watt Family Innovation Center

- 1 Embedded Technology**  
Embedded technology enables collaborative learning and interaction among students, faculty, and partners.
- 2 Collaboration Stations**  
Students are collaborating in classrooms, projecting their work up on screens, and displaying their work on walls with magnets. They’re writing on the glass, on whiteboards, and on the electronic displays with their fingers—equations are covering full panels of glass.
- 3 Virtual Tools**  
With so many virtual and visual display tools, students and staff look at information from different viewpoints and share it in a way that was never possible in former education models.
- 4 Natural Light**  
Glass walls bring in natural light and create an open, vibrant core inside with views of campus outside—providing a space that draws people from all over the university to meet and study.

## A Landmark Project

“When people come in many of them ask, ‘Does it look how you thought it would?’” said Dr. Watt. “I say, ‘It is fantastic.’ We had a model when we visited Haworth and their building, and many of those features are incorporated in here. We were not able to completely visualize flexibility until we saw it.”

At the heart of the building is the atrium, stamped with the paw print of the Clemson Tiger. The icon serves as a focal point among orange tile flooring, accompanied by a massive video screen that conveys the Clemson brand as soon as people—especially prospective students—walk into the building. From there, you simply need to look around to see innovation happening.

### Showcase Capability

Interior corridors designed with glass allow visibility into the project area showcasing the innovation Clemson is renowned for—attracting prospective engineering students.



“The whole character of this project was innovation. It’s trying something new. How does this impact or enrich the students? It was always the number one focus, which is a great testament to the university.”

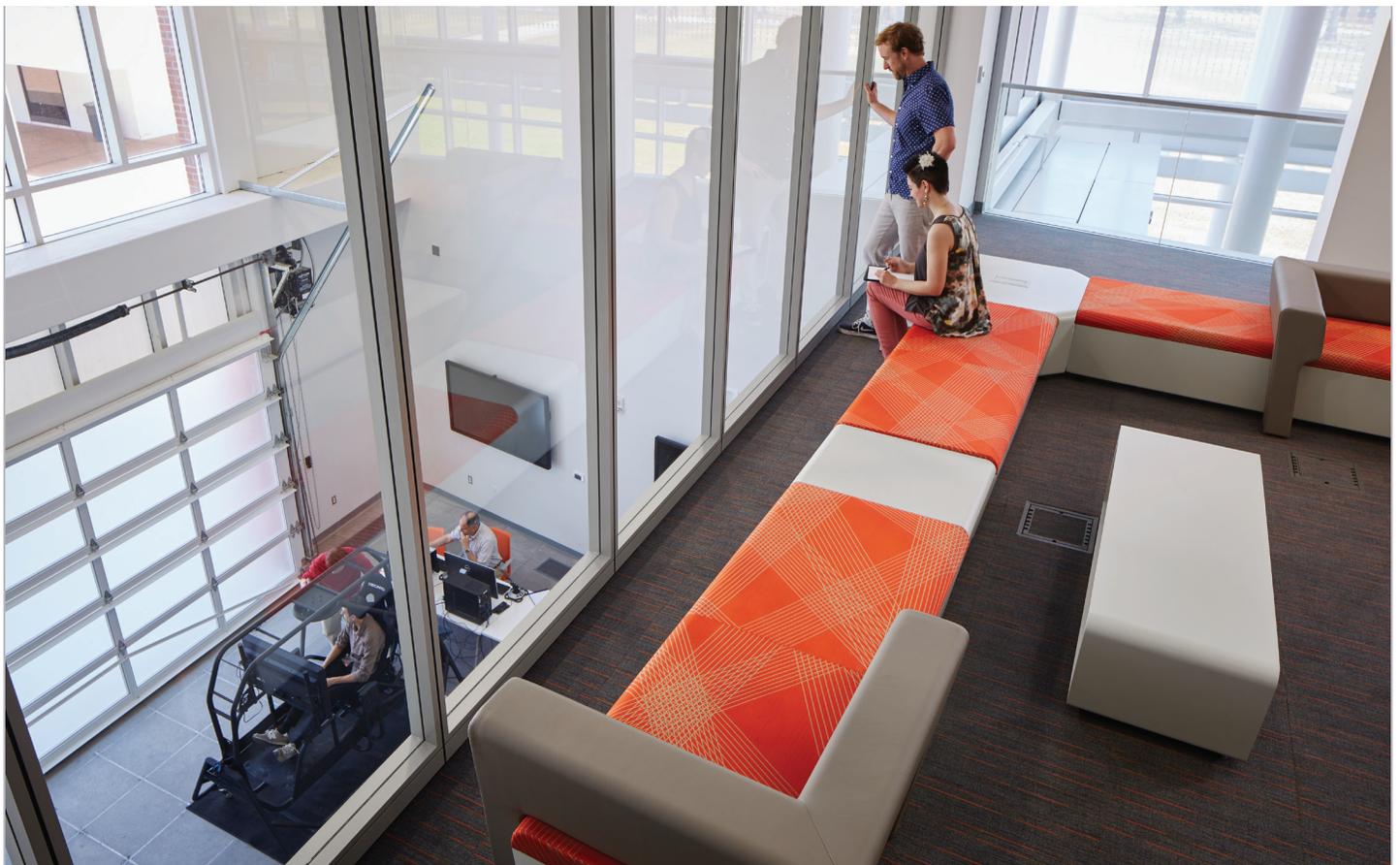
**Floyd Cline**

Senior Associate with Perkins + Will  
Project Manager, Watt Family Innovation Center



**Innovative Space Solutions**

Near the back of the building is a two-story space with a roll-up garage door, allowing students to work on larger projects.





## Customer Profile

South Carolina's highest-ranked national university is located in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, with research facilities and economic development hubs throughout the state. Founded in 1889, Clemson is a top-25 public university with a reputation for its dedication to teaching, research, and service. Clemson provides a hands-on education—in the lab, in the arts, and in the field.

## Featured Haworth Products

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- Enclose® Walls
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- Hoop™ Tables
- Intuity® Benching
- K700™ (HC)
- LTB™ (HC)
- Masters Series® Wood Casegoods
- m\_sit™ (HC)
- Patterns™ Architectural Elements
- Planes® Tables
- Reside® Desking
- SE04™ (HC)
- Tilt™ Stools
- ToDo® Lounge Seating
- Very® Seating
- X Series® Casegoods and Storage
- Zody® Seating

*HC indicates Haworth Collection products.*