



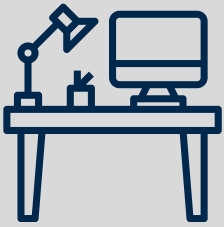
# Environment as Culture:

## Shaping Spaces That Reflect What We Value

We're focusing on Environment, the physical and digital spaces we shape and share. From desk setups and signage to Zoom layouts and shared drives, our environments influence how we engage, communicate and feel.

Does our environment send a message of respect and a commitment to creating a welcome and supportive space for everyone?

Let's explore how thoughtful environments can reinforce inclusion, collaboration and a sense of belonging—one decision, layout or hallway at a time.



### Quick Wins for Your Space

**Practical, high-impact strategies for aligning your environment with your values**

Culture doesn't always change through big initiatives. It often starts with small decisions made visible. Here are a few quick actions your team can take this week to signal what you value:

- Reclaim a shared space. Refresh a break room, hallway or corner that's been forgotten. Add seating, lighting or elements that invite people in.
- Declutter digital workspaces. Review shared drives or folders. Do they reflect clarity, ease of use and access for everyone on your team?
- Make values visible. Post your team's mission, principles or even a shared quote in common spaces, both physical and virtual.



### Try This with Your Team

**Build shared awareness and ownership through simple, team-based practices**

**Start a conversation:** Environment is a team effort. Use these prompts and light-touch activities to help your team think more intentionally about space and belonging.

- Hold a 10-minute "space audit." Walk through your physical space or screen-share your digital one. What supports focus, collaboration or connection? What doesn't?
- Rotate a "space steward" role. Each month, invite a different team member to suggest small improvements, such as adding plants, adjusting the layout or trying a new way to organize shared drives.
- Facilitate a values-to-space check-in. Ask: \*What does our environment say about who belongs here, what's important and how we work together?



## See It in Action:

# OVPR Central Communications Team

The OVPR Central Communications team is rethinking what it means to create a shared digital environment—and it starts with one simple shift: moving team-wide announcements out of email and into a dedicated Google Chat space.

Instead of sending one-off messages that get buried in inboxes, the team now uses a shared chat room to post timely updates, meeting links and cross-team news. This not only reduces email fatigue but also creates a more transparent, real-time space where everyone stays in the loop.

***“It’s changed the tone of how we communicate. We feel more connected, and announcements don’t get lost. Plus, we’ve reclaimed our inboxes for focused work.”***

This small shift in digital space design has led to clearer communication, more consistent awareness across the team and fewer missed details, all while reinforcing the team's values of openness, simplicity and shared ownership.

## Share Your Practice

We’d love to feature examples from across our research community.

👉 Let us know how your team is shaping environments that reflect your values by emailing [ovpr.spie@umich.edu](mailto:ovpr.spie@umich.edu).

