

# 10 of the best study spots on campus



*Students and community members walk around and sit by Boneyard Creek in Urbana.*

Every college student knows that navigating the switch from high school to college contains a myriad of drastic shifts, including a location change, a new schedule and living with a roommate, but perhaps the most significant difference in the college lifestyle is the sudden influx of independence. Nigh-perpetual strings of classes no longer govern every aspect of a student's day, once halted only by approved bathroom breaks and frenetic passing periods. In college, actual class time is sporadic, spread across the sprawling campus and often devoid of attendance checks, making for a far more flexible experience.

But while this sudden cascade of freedom is a boon to the weary high school graduate, it's not like college is a land of milk and honey either, as it presents its own unique challenges. With great power comes great responsibility, and it's up to each student to stay on top of their work despite the lack of oppressive authority. While classes don't span from sunup to sundown, assignments, tests and projects sometimes can, making the pursuit of a comfortable, production-maximizing space paramount to a fruitful college experience.

So, if trying to knock out a paper with nothing but your laptop's lurid gleam 30 minutes before it's due in a cramped dorm with your roommate snoring just isn't your vibe, never fear, because Illinois' campus is teeming with perfect study spots for every task and occasion.

## **The Main Library**

Wedged between the campus' Main and South quads, the Main Library is a serene, no-frills place to be productive. Erected in 1924, the venerable edifice doubles as a capsule of the University's history, featuring the Georgian Revival style that characterizes many of the campus' early buildings and is complete with ornate sculptures and a colossal collection of books. It's a place by the erudite, for the erudite, so when it's time to don your thinking cap and make things happen, the Main Library is the place to be.

## **The Grainger Engineering Library**

The Engineering Library isn't the most beautiful or welcoming structure, but its pragmatic utility more than makes up for its imposing exterior. Open 24 hours during the school week and available to all students and faculty regardless of their affiliation with engineering, the Grainger Engineering Library has a well-earned reputation as a place students go with their backs to the wall to get things done. If you've procrastinated a final project you had a month to take care of until a few hours before the deadline, the Grainger Engineering Library is a phenomenal spot to grit your teeth, lock in and find a way to turn that thing in on time.

## **The Funk ACES Library**

Don't be fooled by the polygonal edifice's brutalist appearance — the Funk ACES Library is warm, welcoming and breathtaking throughout its lofty interior. Its overhead window and central well allow a deluge of natural light to permeate the building, galvanizing the multi-level structure and providing a sense of openness. The library's sheer magnitude also enables each student to find an intimate locale conducive to their study skillset, making the Funk ACES Library a perfect balance between open-concept and cozy, and a prime example of why you never judge a book — or a whole library — by its cover.

## **The Communications Library**

A gem hidden in plain sight in the prominent Gregory Hall, the bijou and homey Communications Library presents a precise blend of classic and modern with its mahogany-hued bookshelves in stark contrast to the television screens that adorn the walls. It truly feels more like a home than an academic building, so if doing homework around the kitchen table while your siblings ran around pestering you brings back fond memories, the Communications Library is the perfect place to rekindle some of that familiar spirit.

## Outdoor spaces

### The Main Quad

During the rare days when the sun holds dominion over the tumultuous and malevolent elements that have their way throughout most of the Midwest's academic year, the Main Quad is the place to be. Every time the sun peeks out from its perch beneath the clouds' celestial shroud and imbues the land with warmth, the Main Quad immediately morphs into a beacon of productivity and joy. In true Rockwellian fashion, the gentle chirping of birds, the clap of frisbee meeting hand and its persistent whirl upon being discharged again and the constant buzz of amicable interaction make for the perfect spot to study on an idyllic spring day.

### The South Quad

Hidden in plain sight, the South Quad receives far fewer visitors than its more central counterpart, but for those seeking a quieter outdoor study space, it's an outstanding choice. The verdant swathes surrounding the magnificent bell tower comprise a flawless backdrop for productivity. It's a wonder why more people don't take the short trek and amble over from the Main Quad to the South Quad, but as long as the South Quad remains underappreciated, it will have no reason to rescind its status as a prime locale for hardcore outdoor study.

### Boneyard Creek

A fixture of the Champaign-Urbana area, this winding tributary slices directly through campus, making its banks a charming backdrop for academic labor. Boneyard Creek isn't just a study spot, either — it doubles as a perfect place to clear your head and drive out stress by taking in nature's beauty. Boneyard's banks are a picturesque place for pensive thought, mental decompression and, if you're up to it, a little bit of studying as well. You might not want to lug your chunky textbooks to Boneyard Creek, but some quick flash cards and contemplation as the water flows by could be a recipe for a mental and emotional revival.

## Communal spaces

### The Illini Union

For students who thrive upon being inextricably woven into the campus' pulse, the Union is a fantastic study spot. Situated at the head of the Main Quad, the Union is the epicenter of campus life, enveloped in a constant buzz of convivial chatter. While the noise can feel strident to students who need silence to study, those who are invigorated by the building's palpable energy can reap a plethora of benefits. Part community center, part bazaar, the Union contains no shortage of comfortable chairs to sink into as well as a myriad of restaurants and shops. For students who can halt their typing to snag a cup of coffee or catch up with a classmate before diving back into their work with even more conviction, the Union is an excellent place to get work done and have fun doing it.

### The Campus Instructional Facility

Built with the aim of providing a new state-of-the-art educational building on Illinois' monolithic and perhaps slightly antiquated campus, the CIF accomplished that aim upon its completion in 2021. The nascent building has yet to lose any of its shine and is the type of unrestricted, open-concept haven that lends itself to unobstructed thought. The whimsically constructed building does contain several classrooms — a hotbed for student traffic — but if that's not a dealbreaker for you, you can't go wrong by taking advantage of one of the University's newest and most advanced spaces.

### Siebel Center for Design

If you need a non-constricting, aesthetically pleasing space to unlock your full mental capacity, Siebel's sprawling and thoughtfully adorned confines are a perfect study spot. Despite the building's vast and imposing structure, it's easy to find a cozy nook to nestle in and get things done. Unlike many popular study spots, which seem cramped and confined by academia, Siebel's vast windows and open concept — which essentially links the building's entire interior into one thoughtfully woven continuum — provide a sense of freedom that is often lacking amid the voluntary bondage of studying. The building's creative aesthetic does come at a cost however, as minor noises are often amplified as they spring off the oddly positioned surfaces, making Siebel a suboptimal spot for students who require extreme quiet to do their best work.

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