

# Columbia Business School Readies Its \$600 Million New Campus For A Jan. 4th Debut

BY: JOHN A. BYRNE ON DECEMBER 13, 2021



The final finishing touches are now being put in place at Columbia Business School's new campus

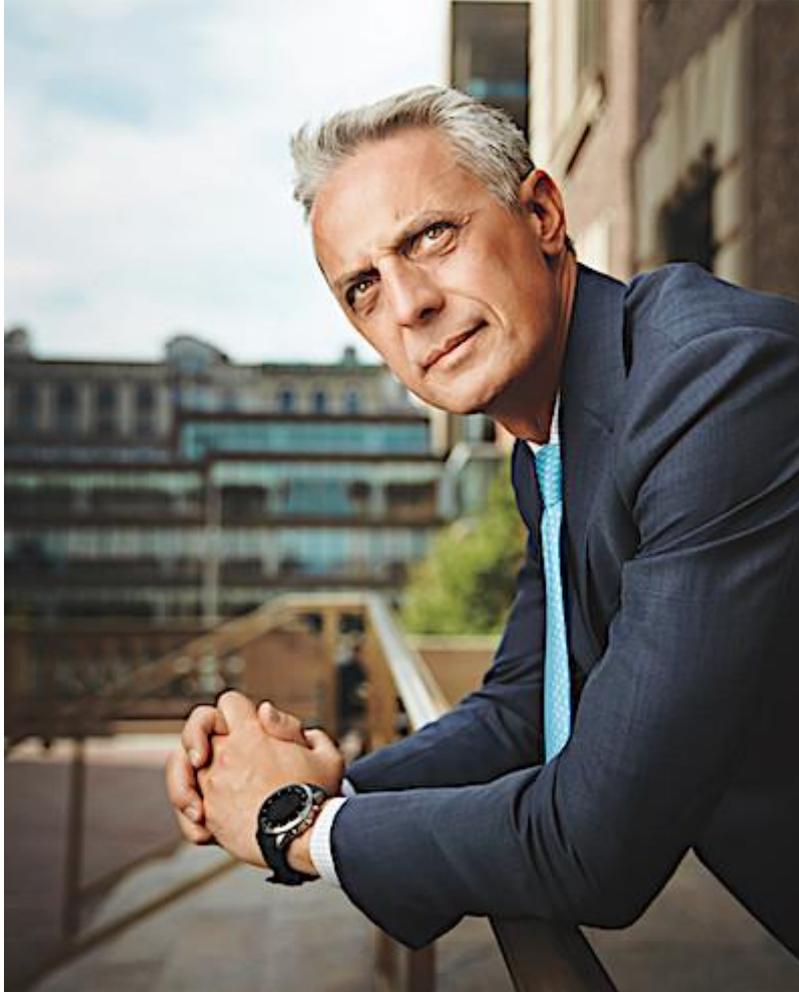
It is no secret that **Columbia Business School** has long had the dubious distinction of calling home one of the worst campus facilities of any major business school in the world.

Uris Hall, the school's home for more than half a century, has been a cramped coven of narrow hallways in an unattractive block of gray concrete. In fact, from the very beginning, the building was deemed so ugly that architecture students picketed its dedication in 1961. One overzealous critic, writing in the student newspaper, called Uris a "monumental offense," demanding that it be demolished. The building has been the butt of many jokes in the business school's annual follies shows.

Little has changed over the 60 years, despite many efforts to put lipstick on the pig. Inside the overcrowded building, there has long been a paucity of adequate space for collaborative work, no student lounges, long waits at the elevators, and no flexible classrooms to speak of. The growth of Columbia Business School over the

years, moreover, forced the school to spread out over five buildings on the Columbia University campus.

## **THE NEW \$600 MILLION CAMPUS WILL BE A GAME CHANGER FOR COLUMBIA BUSINESS SCHOOL**



**Columbia Business School Dean Costis Maglaras**

So the forthcoming Jan. 4th opening of the business school's new complex at the university's new Manhattanville campus cannot be overestimated. In every possible way, it is a game changer for one of the world's most elite business schools. Along with **a new emphasis in the curriculum on climate change**, the new facility will put Columbia Business School at the forefront of business education.

For one thing, the entirety of Uris Hall could easily be plopped into just one of the two new buildings in the complex which more than doubles the size of the school's existing space. For another, the stunning design of the layer-cake buildings will dramatically boost pride among students, faculty and staff in their day-to-day living in the new center. Most of all, however, it will dramatically increase the amount of interaction between students and the faculty.

At a price tag of \$600 million, the new facilities represent the most expensive business school ever built, more than double the cost to build Yale School of Management's \$243 million building or Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management \$250 million Hub with its 415,000 square feet of available space. Kellogg opened its new building in 2017, while Yale moved into its new 240,000 square-foot building in 2014. And just three years ago, Carnegie Mellon's Tepper School of Business spent \$201 million on its new 315,000-square-foot home.

On a Friday tour of the new complex, as hundreds of construction workers went through their final punch lists, Dean Costis Maglaras took *Poets&Quants* on a detailed tour of the 492,000 square foot campus sandwiched between the West Side Highway and the elevated subway line at 130th and Broadway in New York's gentrified West Harlem. The business school will be based in two buildings, the 11-story Henry R. Kravis Hall, with a view of the Hudson River, and the eight-floor David Geffen Hall, minutes from the 125th St. stop for the 1 Broadway – 7 Avenue Local. The towers, roughly a half mile north of the university's main campus in Upper Manhattan, are separated by an acre-large New York City park and an underground tunnel.

### **'BUSINESS EDUCATION IS SOCIAL' AND THE NEW COMPLEX WILL VASTLY INCREASE INTERACTION**

The new complex could not be more different than the space it will depart by year's end to be taken over by the university's arts and sciences departments. At Uris, points out Maglaras, the bottom three floors were for students, while the remaining five floors were largely occupied by faculty offices.

"Years ago, university buildings were designed so that the classrooms were separate from the faculty," points out Maglaras, wearing hard hat during the tour. "In our new buildings, the faculty are not separated from the students. Business education is social. So we are mixing the groups to motivate movement and interaction. This is a dramatic change for how the population will be organized in the new buildings."

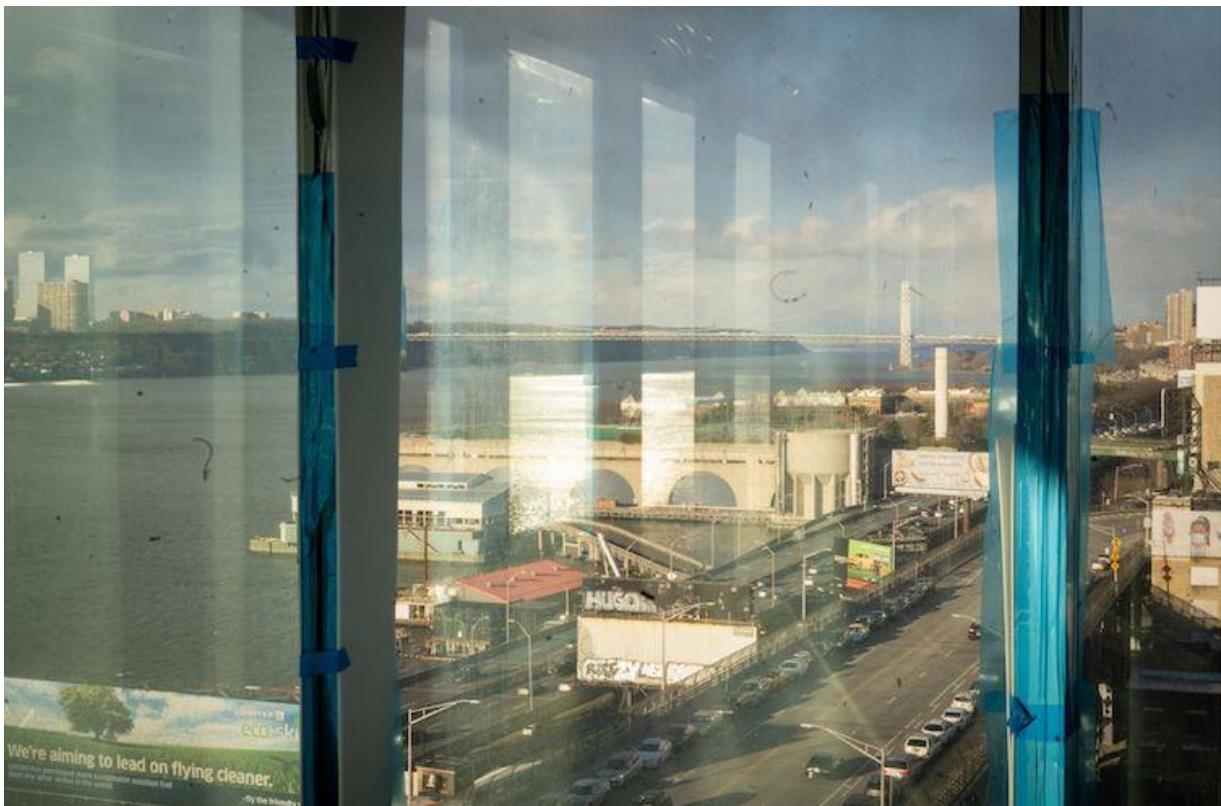
In the Kravis building, for example, student classrooms will occupy every other floor, with faculty offices in between each. The building will also lead to a reorganization of the faculty. Instead of professors being assigned offices by discipline, the faculty is being split into subgroups so they are mixed to encourage more interdisciplinary work and engagement. "It is to stimulate interaction and more interdisciplinary research," says Maglaras. In the new buildings, "nobody has a corner office." Instead, every corner has been devoted to a classroom, a lounge or a conference room.

## **'STUDENT LIFE WILL IMPROVE...THE WAY WE TEACH AND EDUCATE WILL CHANGE'**

"Apart from the dramatic increase in classroom space, there is a dramatic increase in networking places and co-working places," adds the dean, noting that there will be a nine-fold increase in study rooms for students. "The buildings relax constraints. Student life will improve. The way we can teach and educate will change in the space."

The recruitment of its students will see great improvement, too. The new career center on the seventh floor of Geffen Hall features 25 interview rooms for corporate recruiters along with a corner lounge.

The dean also foresees a broader role of the business school in the life of the university. "We have more space so we can bring more people back to the school. We will convene business leaders and alumni in a way that was not possible in our previous buildings. It expands the intellectual energy of the school, and we want it to be a nexus for the university to bring our engineering and medical school colleagues here. It creates a place to congregate intellectual energy throughout the university."



**The view from a classroom in David Geffen Hall**

## **'FROM A COCOON BEHIND UNIVERSITY GATES, OUR NEW BUILDINGS HAVE NOW EMBRACED THE CITY'**

The new complex also makes a symbolic statement of sorts that it the school is a more central part of New York City despite its location uptown. "When we are in Uris, we are in a cocoon of the university behind gates," explains Maglaras. "In our new buildings we have embraced the city, and New York is visible."

From the massive four-pane windows imported from Venice, students have expansive views of the vehicles rushing across the Henry Hudson Parkway next to a gleaming Hudson River stretching to the wooded bluffs of New Jersey. On other sides of the buildings, they can peer into the cityscape of midtown New York, catching glimpses of Grant's Tomb on Riverside Drive and West 122nd St. Looking north, the vast span of the George Washington Bridge is clearly visible.

Despite the big increase in space, the school does not plan to increase the size of its MBA program which currently enrolls just under 850 students, divided into 11 clusters. Maglaras says the school will launch a new dual degree with the university's engineering school with plans to enroll the first class in the fall of 2023.

## **DISCUSSIONS ON THE NEED FOR A NEW HOME BEGAN TWO DECADES AGO**

The new campus is a long time in coming. It was two decades ago that discussions first emerged about a new home for the business school. It took nearly ten years of fundraising by Maglaras predecessor, economist Glenn Hubbard, to get the money for the new complex. Over his 15-year term as dean, Hubbard raised more than \$1 billion, including over \$500 million for the school's new home. He secured two of the largest gifts ever pledged to a business school, \$125 million from Henry Kravis, co-founder and co-CEO of the leveraged buyout firm Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co., and an initial pledge of \$100 million from Ronald Perelman, chairman and CEO of MacAndrews & Forbes Holdings. In September of this year, entertainment honcho David Geffen pledged \$75 million to support the school's new home.

Hubbard also led all the planning for the design and construction of the center which has taken five years to complete since the excavation of the site in November of 2016. Other than a four-week stall during the peak of the pandemic, construction workers have been hard at work erecting the new buildings.

Maglaras, who estimates he has spent about 10% of his time on the new building since becoming dean in July of 2019, thinks that the school may have lost about two months off its opening schedule due to COVID. Because orders for building supplies were placed before the pandemic struck, "supply chain disruptions were not

extreme,” he says. “We all know this is a very ambitious and consuming project, but a lot of our energy was hijacked by COVID”.

Over the next week or so, faculty will be moving into their new offices, including the dean who has spent 24 years of his professorial career in Uris. For Maglaras, the move will be “bittersweet.” Still, like everyone else at Columbia Business School, he is looking forward to life in the new complex.



Columbia Business School's Kravis Hall at night, one of two buildings on its new campus at 130th and Broadway

## The Long & Winding Road Toward A New Business School At Columbia

Date	Development
2003	President Bollinger announces the intention to build a campus in the old Manhattanville manufacturing zone of West Harlem

2006	Manhattanville Campus slated to include a site for a single business school building
2007	Columbia University begins the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure in June and finishes in December
2008	General Manhattanville Project Plan adopted and affirmed. Business School now slated for two buildings. Capital campaign launched and architect search begins
2011	Architects Diller Scofidio + Renfro in collaboration with FXFowle are selected to design the business school's two new buildings
2014	Design phase for underground facilities approved
2015	Construction phase for facilities approved
November, 2016	Excavation began
May, 2017	Completion of \$500 million capital campaign for business school complex by Dean Glenn Hubbard
December, 2021	Completion of new B-school buildings, with final punch list fixes
January, 2022	Classes begin in new business school complex