

# WHY CONDUCT A FACILITIES MANAGEMENT EVALUATION PROGRAM

By R. Holly Judd

APPA's Facilities Management Evaluation Program (FMEP) provides the chief facilities officer of an institution with the opportunity to have an evaluation by a team of APPA members from organizations with similar education, financial, and physical characteristics. It is designed to assist any institution in determining the value of its program and the commitment required to conduct such an evaluation.

The objective of the evaluation program is to provide institutions with a snapshot or profile of the quality of the processes used and the results achieved by the facilities management department. The profile is developed by examining the department in key areas to determine the degree to which goals and objectives have been established, the extent to which these are being fulfilled, and the effectiveness of the processes being used to pursue stated goals.

For example, the program focuses on the mission and standards that have been established by the institution and the degree to which they are being met. Many of the processes used to achieve the institutions' goal are assessed within the context of recognized management practices and their alignment with the institution's policies, procedures, and practices.

Since February 1989, APPA has conducted 80 comprehensive organizational evaluations through its Facilities Management Evaluation Program. A representative sampling of

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institutions participating in the program to date include major state and/or research universities, small liberal arts colleges, health science centers, a national laboratory, boarding schools, and world-renowned art museums. Along the way, several hundred experienced evaluators have participated on FMEP teams thus far.

You will find that the overall cost for this standards-based program is reasonably affordable. Determination of your individual institutional

rate is based upon a combination of the institution's full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrollment, its gross institutional expenditure (GIE), the complexity of the operation and its service delivery system, and the logistical expenses for the team's site visit to the campus.

The entire process of the FMEP, including delivery of the final report, normally takes 12 to 16 weeks. Therefore, it is essential that the institution provide the evaluation team a complete and detailed self-evaluation (<http://www.appa.org/recognition/fmepself.cfm>) at least three weeks in advance of the scheduled site visit. This criteria encompasses the following Baldrige-based categories with specific informational and performance items listed under each of these categories:

- Leadership
- Strategic & Operational Planning
- Customer Satisfaction
- Information Analysis
- Development & Management of Human Resources
- Process Management
- Performance Results

Upon completion of the institution's self-evaluation, another important component of a successful evaluation takes place—the team's site visit. The Facilities Management Evaluation Program uses experienced facilities officers and

other professionals to conduct the on-site evaluation. This experienced team is put together with the input and final approval of the requesting institution. A list of peer or aspirational peer institutions, as well as specific needs they may have in conducting the FMEP, helps inform the team member selection process. The number of team members is based on the size and complexity of the institution/organization and the number of days the team expects it will need to complete the evaluation. Teams are normally made up of a team leader and up to four team members with an on-site stay between two to six days of the report.

Upon completion of an oral exit interview/meeting, a draft report is prepared by the team and provided to the institution for final review and comment. After institutional approval is received, the APPA office handles final editing and the production of the report.

***From the many recent evaluations conducted, three institutions in particular agreed to share their rationale for choosing to conduct an APPA FMEP and the benefits they have gained as a result:***

### **Roberts Wesleyan College**

*T. Richard Greer*

In November 2002, the Roberts Wesleyan College Facilities Department conducted a Facilities Management Evaluation Program. The decision to go through the evaluation was driven by a desire to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of our operation from an external viewpoint. We considered two possible options: 1) have an evaluation done by a company that provides facility management services or 2) utilize the APPA evaluation approach. The decision was made to use the APPA evaluation method and stemmed from the need to have 1) input from a separate source not linked to the potential sale for services, 2) evaluators who would also understand the uniqueness of the college and university environment, and 3) professionals from institutions with similar characteristics and background experiences perform the evaluation. These three factors guided the decision to choose APPA. It is important to note that this decision process was fully supported by and involved a deliberate conversation with the chief financial officer of the college.

The three-person evaluation team engaged in a very comprehensive review during their two- and one-half-day visit to our campus. The schedule was arranged to interview and have dialog with 22 key constituent groups not including myriad meetings with the facilities management team, building services, custodial, and grounds staff. To achieve this broad spectrum of input from the campus requires diligent advance planning and should not be overlooked. Evaluations at any level are only as good as the effort we invest in their success.

The APPA evaluation team made 26 specific recommendations or opportunities for improvements, covering the areas of

leadership, planning, customer satisfaction, information analysis, human resources, process management, and performance. In addition to these recommendations, there was affirmation of what was being done well which served as a good source of encouragement and further built the facility staff morale.

Now that we had this wealth of information it would only prove to be as valuable as the extent to which it was implemented into our daily activities. Assessment without implementation results in wasted resources. The facilities management team reviewed the report and it was sent out electronically to all of the participants in the evaluation. The facilities management team met weekly, specifically to develop a prioritized action plan to implement the recommendations. The action plan required changes in processes and methods that would effect all of the facilities staff and ultimately, in a positive way, each of our customers.

During this time the college implemented a plan to have each division and department develop an assessment and planning document similar in content to an accreditation self-study. This provided an opportunity to incorporate the FMEP recommendations into a comprehensive planning tool for the department. Monthly departmental meetings were dedicated to the development of the plan and the implementation of the recommendations. As a result, we developed a plan with both short-term and long-range goals and objectives that provided clear direction to our department and was fully supported by the department's employees, the senior administration, and the board of trustees.

Today, the facilities department is stronger, more effective, and has a greater sphere of influence throughout the institution. The recommendations that were provided and continue to be implemented have played a valuable role in the department's development enabling us to better support and serve our customers. To be effective requires an ongoing commitment to improve. When we become content with where we are as a department not only does growth stop but also a gradual backward slide takes place and can undo all the progress that has been made since our evaluation in November 2002.

In our experience, the Facilities Management Evaluation is a tool that creates the opportunity for success when combined with the commitment of the facilities professionals to pursue excellence.

### **Queens University**

*Tom Morrow*

Early in 2002, the senior management responsible for the facilities at Queen's University at Kingston were exploring options for undertaking an external review of the structure and management of the facilities area. Ultimately we selected APPA's Facilities Management Evaluation Program. To assist others who may be considering the use of this APPA service, we wanted to share with you the reasons why we undertook the review, how useful the review was to the department, and

our overall sense of the review process.

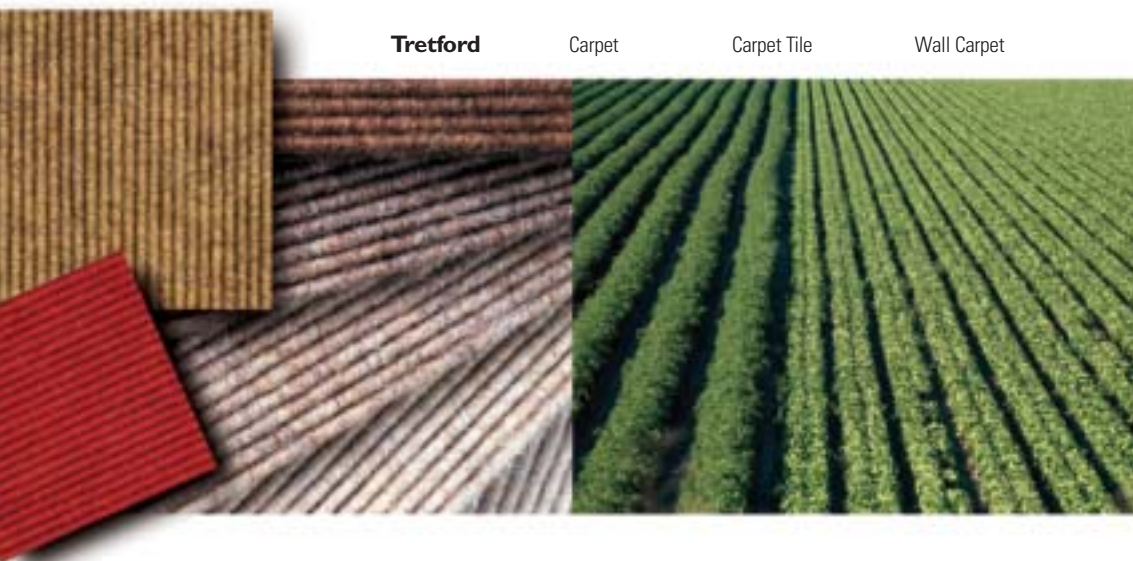
Queen's University, an international university with a reputation for excellence in teaching, research, and scholarship, is located on the north shore of Lake Ontario in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. The university has a population of approximately 18,000 full-time and part-time undergraduate students and approximately 2,500 graduate students. The university includes the faculties of Arts & Science, Applied Science (engineering), Health Sciences (includes medicine, nursing and rehabilitation and occupational therapy), Law, Education, School of Business, and School of Graduate Studies. A staff of approximately 200 is responsible for campus planning, facilities maintenance, custodial services, and project management, comprising 170 buildings and 4.5-million square feet.

The decision to proceed with the Facilities Management Evaluation Program (FMEP) became an obvious choice once our goals were established. We looked at self-evaluation alternatives including the self-managed approach to an FMEP. However, with the strong tradition of external reviews by the academic departments within the university, putting in place a similar review process for one of the major administrative units was a high priority. It was also time to review a major reorganization within the Physical Plant Services area that had been implemented in 1995 to access how well the efficiency and customer service objectives of this change were being

achieved. The university also wanted assurance that the major risks associated with the facilities side of the organization had been identified. Again, the structured approach to the FMEP would assist in providing this assurance. The process also permitted the facilities area to obtain an independent assessment of how the unit and its services were viewed by the campus community; while we regularly solicit feedback in this area, verification of our results through the FMEP process would strengthen our resolve for the priorities for the department.

The following steps were taken that enhanced the success of the program. Having senior management within the unit initiate the review clearly signaled to the campus community and the people within the departments the importance of the review and openness on the part of the department to embrace change. A commitment was also made early on to share the results of the review. A meeting with members of the department was held to review the findings and the complete report was posted on the departmental website and available to everyone.

The university also played a very active role in the selection of the APPA representatives to lead the review. The results support our desire to have both a representative from the university system within the province of Ontario as well as representatives from other jurisdictions. This was important to the credibility of the review both within the department and on



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the campus as a whole. We also actively recruited sectors of the campus community to be engaged in the review; the review team met with students, representatives of academic departments at various levels of the organization, senior management as well as members of governance committees.

The Facilities Management Evaluation Program met our objectives well. It reinforced in an impartial way the departments view that we are doing a good job with the resources made available to us. It reinforced a number of initiatives we have undertaken over the past years and the recommendations encouraged us to continue and expand a number of these initiatives. It has been a boost to employee morale. It has been helpful in the development of our budget plans and in arguing for improved support for the facilities area. It ensured we had not missed major risk issues as those close to the area naturally focus on the day-to-day pressures of providing services.

This program clearly met the objectives we set for it and was worth the effort in undertaking the review.

## Portland State University

*Robyn Pierce*

The APPA Facilities Management Evaluation Program provided a comprehensive tool for the incoming Portland State University Director of Facilities & Planning (FAP), Mike Irish, to assess the condition of the administrative operations as well as the service impression left on members of the university community by the members of his new staff.

Mike returned to Portland State University (PSU) after 18 years, four universities, working as a construction inspector/project manager, assistant director, director and associate vice president. Returning to Portland and PSU offered new challenges and a chance to return home to close family members in the metropolitan area. Mike also supervised the construction of several campus buildings during his earlier tenure at PSU.

When Mike began work on campus in January 2003, he immediately set expectations for his management team and he demonstrated the traits he wanted to see in their behavior, operations, and service levels. He asked that the department be scheduled for the APPA FMEP evaluation as soon as possible. Simultaneously he was working to refine administrative processes and improve documentation and accountability.

The FMEP was conducted in June 2003, by a team led by Thomas Stepnowski, former director (retired) facilities maintenance services at Rutgers University of New Jersey. The team consisted of Earl Smith, facilities director at Williams College and Ronald L. Bailey, operations analyst and property manager at Western Washington University. They conducted interviews with university community members at all levels including executive level staff, campus customers (including students), and FAP departmental employees. The APPA team also researched background information, reports, and field verified information provided by the department in its self-assessment.

All of this was occurring at a time when the Oregon Legislature was in session, revenues were in severe decline, and the budget picture looked bleak. So bleak in fact that the governor had ordered all public employees, including represented employees, held without additional compensation or any financial mechanism for recognizing merit or retaining services indefinitely.

PSU has been fortunate to have a dedicated and loyal group of employees in the Facilities & Planning Department. These employees constantly look for better ways of performing their duties and providing paramount service to their customers. The trades workers have proved that some things are not for sale and dedication has no price. Initially met with a resist-

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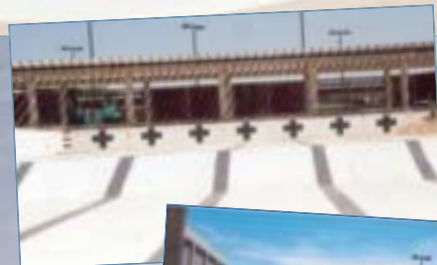
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ance to change, this group has made the fastest progress to change business practices and take on new challenges. Growth of in-house work has almost doubled the size of the FAP workforce since Mike arrived.

The FMEP report was the best tool for PSU's transition under new leadership. The FMEP program utilized seasoned professionals that have dealt with similar situations and provided experienced peer analysis of functionality and operations. The APPA team was able to quickly get up to speed and assess the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and threats to meeting the goals and objectives of the department and the university.

As expected, the FMEP report detailed the requirement for additional documentation of standards at PSU. This is an ongoing process as procedures are evaluated, realigned, and solidified. Documentation is developed from the ground up working through all associated employees. The shift had already begun under Mike's leadership to build active cooperation in planning and decision making. A significant reduction in outsourcing has allowed the department to self-perform many more functions while growing the numbers of well qualified in-house staff. Employees continue to be provided specialized training and advanced education. Customer service, team building, and conflict resolution trainings for all staff are conducted through comprehensive full or half-day



seminars. A current endeavor is underway to procure and provide identifiable uniforms for all staff. The committee is a mixture of trades workers, union representatives, managers, and administrative staff.

The FMEP report provided a brutally honest assessment of weaknesses blended with insightful suggestions and recommendations for improvements and growth, resulting in constructive forward progress toward meeting the departmental goals. It allowed Mike and his management team to focus on

actions to turn weaknesses into strengths and build a future out of rubble left from years of downsizing. The silos continue to be broken down in Facilities & Planning and across all elements of Finance and Administration at PSU. The vice president is supportive of current operations and endeavors to improve service. While Facilities and Planning is still faced with a state legislature that continues to poorly fund higher education and expects campuses to absorb additional unfunded mandates and a booming student enrollment, our staff has found new pride and an excellent road map for success as provided by APPA's FMEP Team.

If you would like to learn more about the Facilities Management Evaluation Program, please call 703-684-1446 ext 234 or visit our website [www.appa.org](http://www.appa.org) for additional information. 🏢

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