



CAMPUS AUXILIARY FACILITIES:

Universities Strive
to Accommodate
Student Desires
and Future Trends

by Alan Dessoiff



From student housing and food services to student unions and bookstores, things are not the way they used to be on college and university campuses. The needs and demands of current students, as well as faculty and staff—and the pressures on institutions to compete for new students—are driving changes in auxiliary facilities that are a growing component of support for the academic side of campus life.

These issues also are driving facilities managers and other administrators to consider how to renovate older buildings or construct new ones to provide the contemporary lifestyle arrangements that students are used to, including the latest technological advances. Then they have to plan how they will pay for these enhancements and justify costs in proposed budgets.

“The needs and desires of students and their families have changed over the past ten years, more so than in any other period I have seen,” says Connie Carson, president of the Association of College and University Housing Officers-International (ACUHO-I). The former executive director of residential services at Wake Forest University, Carson now

oversees a broad range of changes at Wake Forest as the institution’s assistant vice president for campus services and planning.

The Demands for Campus Housing

Student housing is one element undergoing dramatic change on campuses across the country. It is no longer enough for a college or university to provide students with four walls and a bed. Students are demanding more from their residential experience, and institutional administrators recognize that by offering a unique, functional, and technologically advanced living experience, they can better attract and retain students.

“There’s a lot more interest in housing with more amenities than the basic ones that historically have been provided on campuses. Suite-style and apartment housing has become the trend,” Carson says.

Kids want privacy because most students have never shared a bedroom or bathroom with another person, says Jim Roberts, vice president for business and administration at Campbell University, which offers single rooms and apartment-style suites for students.

That’s the type of lifestyle many institutions are seeking to accommodate, says Andy Hofmeister, director of residential facilities at Ohio State University.

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At his university, a new 512-bed facility nearing completion was partly designed for students who want to live in their own little bubble, completely isolated from the world.

However Hofmeister says isolated living is not necessarily a good thing. Accordingly, the facility features “super suites” housing eight students—two in each of three shared bedrooms and two in their own private rooms, with all the students sharing bathrooms. Ohio State plans to renovate two existing seven-story residential towers in similar suite-type arrangements.

A significant trend in housing is the integration of students’ in-classroom and out-of-classroom experiences in new residential facilities where students both live and engage academically in a different way.

The newest student housing facility at Wake Forest includes classroom and multi-purpose space, some student organization office space, and private study areas, as well as fully-furnished apartments where students live.

Technology is a key part of students’ housing expectations. Ohio State’s new building will include the latest technological

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advances, and the university will begin this summer to install about 300 new wireless access points throughout its entire housing system.

Housing and other auxiliary facilities usually generate revenue and are sometimes self-sustaining. Carson says housing is typically a cash cow that contributes to an institution’s operating budget. But she adds that many residential facilities and other buildings usually are built to last 50 to 100 years and fiscal issues come into play when both public and private institutions consider how to pay to renovate them or build new facilities. Then it needs to be implemented at a relatively fast pace, to meet student demands and keep up with trends.



Campbell University is adding stand-alone brand-name snack bars, including Quizno's Subs and Starbucks, where students can use their meal plan cards to pay for their choices.

“How do you fund that as an auxiliary enterprise? Do you do bonds? Or work with a private developer? That’s a huge issue for housing professionals,” Carson says.

Many schools do not want their bond ratings to change so they limit bond applications, or states impose limits for public institutions. Meanwhile, senior administrators at institutions often have to be convinced that financing is going to pay off and make money for the institution.

Competition for students, sometimes through their parents, can be a convincing factor. Parents recognize that if students are happy outside the classroom, they will perform better inside. Carson says research shows that students who live on campus tend to be more successful academically than students who live elsewhere. Yet, she says providing additional amenities need to come at a cost that students can afford.

Through the 21st Century Project, ACUHO-I is assisting colleges and universities in designing new residential facilities that reflect the changing roles residences play in the collegiate experience. Stackable rooms, fold-out beds, and a one-piece sink and toilet will be some of the features in the residence hall of the future, according to Jonathan Levi Architects of Boston, which won the grand prize for best design at a 21st Century Project design showcase presented by ACUHO-I early this year. The winning firm’s innovative ideas also included technological advances like a smart-media wall and glass walls with adjustable transparencies.

Carson suggests there is still a place for the least expensive type of campus housing—the traditional double room in a corridor-style dormitory. A lot of institutions still believe that having that experience with a roommate is a part of college life.



The new Adele H. Stamp Student Union at University of Maryland-College Park includes 13 food operations; a mailing and shipping center; a full-service bank; and a “Terp Zone” with pool tables, bowling, big-screen televisions, and interactive video games.

Food Service Has Changed Dramatically

In addition to where they live, students want more choices in what and where they eat on campuses. Carson, whose responsibilities at Wake Forest include dining services, suggests that this part of campus life has changed even more than housing.

“The biggest trend is variation in types of food and styles of service. Students want a meal to be an event,” says Jodi Smith, marketing director of the National Association of College and University Food Services.

To make it an event, many campus dining halls now offer foods cooked to order as students watch. There is no more mystery about what goes on back in the kitchen. Everything is done out front. That means food service workers need more training in customer service.

“Instead of being in the back of the house chopping things all day, they’re interacting with their customers. It creates a more engaging experience for the students,” Smith says.

Many institutions, particularly in urban areas, find themselves competing with local eateries and even late-night pizza deliveries, since most students today grew up eating out. Some dining departments are trying to keep students on campus by putting convenience store-type facilities, often kiosks, in popular locations.

“The small retail spaces are where they want to go, whether they are self-operated or outsourced,” says Bob Hasmler, CEO of the National Association of College Auxiliary Services.

Campbell University is adding stand-alone brand-name snack bars, including Quizno’s Subs and Starbucks, where students can use their meal plan cards to pay for their choices. Campbell also renovated its dining halls, with repainted walls, new tables and chairs, and other improvements.

“They get a sandwich, fries and a drink, and it’s considered a meal,” Roberts says. “If they want to add desert or something else, they can take it off their card.”

Smith says many institutions are renovating how their dining halls look from the outside as well as inside, seeking to give modernistic updates to buildings constructed several decades ago. But that probably won’t work on campuses where facilities have established looks that are part of the campus image, she adds.

Revitalizing the Student Union and Campus Bookstore

The student union is the central hub of the college campus, thus the whole campus community—students, faculty and staff—visit this area at least once a day. The University of Maryland-College Park recently completed a six-year, \$60 million complete gut and renovation to bring its Adele H. Stamp Student Union up to speed to serve the daily needs of its users. Stephen Gnadt, associate director of the facility, says up to 25,000 people go through the building every day.

There are about 34,000 students on the College Park campus, including 10,000 who live there. Gnadt sees the union as a vital resource for students, as well as faculty and staff, who are reluctant to leave the campus, especially at night, because of crime in nearby areas.

The facility now includes 13 food operations, from a full-service restaurant and student-run natural foods co-op to a food court with brands like McDonalds and Taco Bell; a mailing and shipping center; full-service bank; student organization offices; and a “Terp Zone,” with pool tables, bowling, big-screen televisions, interactive video games, and more food choices.

The building offers a wireless Internet service, so students can sit anywhere and use their computers. Students without their own computers can check out laptops from the main information desk.

In renovating the building, Maryland paid particular attention to environmentally friendly and healthy elements. The university placed new recycling containers all around the building and installed low-capacity flush toilets to conserve water.

The Maryland student union also houses the university’s bookstore, another auxiliary facility that is changing dramatically on many campuses. Textbooks still account for about 65 percent of total bookstore sales nationally, but new trends in marketing are changing the way bookstores look and operate, says Ed Schlichenmayer, senior vice president of the National Association of College Stores.

“E-commerce has opened up new ways for students to get course materials, so we’re seeing a lot more actual merchandising of textbooks—more point-of-purchase signing, maybe hanging cards if a digital book is available, freshening up the textbook section so it doesn’t look like a warehouse,” Schlichenmayer says.

From books to staples like notebooks and pens, bookstores are trying to look and feel more like Office Depot, Staples, Office Max and other popular retail emporiums.

"From an aesthetic perspective, what's mostly changing is the look and feel of bookstores. They're becoming more like convenience centers, akin to drug stores, where students can pop in and pick up school supplies, clothing, health and beauty aids, and electronics," Schlichenmayer says.

Other auxiliary facilities and services are also changing on many campuses. More institutions face growing parking needs as virtually every student now tries to bring a car on campus and want to park as close as possible to where they are going.

Hasmiller suggests steering more students to transportation systems. More colleges are either taking over local transportation systems or partnering with them, he says.

Whatever their auxiliary facilities and services, a continuing challenge for administrators is adapting buildings constructed decades ago for long-term use to fast-developing current needs, and planning new buildings for needs not yet known.

"Thirty years ago, nobody knew about broadband, the Internet, those kinds of things," Hasmiller says. "The trend is to build flexibility into new buildings today, so tomorrow universities can implement what people today don't know and can't even imagine what they will need." 🏢

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- **Association of College and University Housing Officers—International (ACUHO-I):**
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- **National Association of College Auxiliary Services (NACAS):**
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- **National Association of College Stores (NACS):**
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- **The National Association of College & University Food Services (NACUFS):**
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