

## Small College Core Data Value

by Dan Young

**H**idden under a stack of papers, hiding from my view, is a notification of a due date for information needed to upgrade an HVAC technician's and an electrician's job descriptions. Why do I continue to work hard and find myself buried in processes that have questionable value?

Employee evaluations that are due every year and energy consumption reports that people only glance at seem to occupy most of our time. That is how we have worked for years as physical plant directors of small colleges and universities with limited staff and budgets.

We have a difficult time setting daily priorities because the priorities change daily. It's easy to redirect a team of one, but it becomes difficult to delegate responsibilities within that team when you are the only one standing. What was important today may have very little significance tomorrow.

"I am willing to guess that 90 percent of directors feel like they have no time to do the work to develop mandated reports," says Pete Sandburg of St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota.

Ron Dupuis of Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario says, "Surveys are time-consuming tasks with no payback." A physical plant director needs to learn effective time management. Every hour has to produce a result or solve a problem.

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How many e-mails does it take to destroy your day?

APPA has been developing tools for years that assist us in saving time and presenting our fiscal pictures to our administrative front offices. Some have been relatively easy to understand and some have been a

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challenge. Starting in 2004 APPA unveiled a new tool, the Facilities Core Data Survey. Evolving from earlier data collection efforts—the Comparative Costs and Staffing Report (CCAS) and the Strategic Assessment Model (SAM)—the new Core Data Survey was developed by APPA's Information and Research Committee to provide an annual survey that would result in the Web-based *Facilities Performance*

*Indicators* report and dashboard indicators.

The value of the Facilities Core Data Survey can only be realized by your regular contribution of data and use of the reports. Yes, it will take time from your busy day, but there is credibility in the database for small and large schools alike. The survey is *not* for larger schools only; in fact, my own school was part of the first cycle of information gathering.

This new tool requires some study to understand the dedication to complete the task of initial submittal. After that it's like doing your taxes with a "box" software package.

Once data has been entered, it's a matter of supplying new data when another cycle has been initiated. If you want to compare your school's data with a similar institution, then the option is available. The Information and Research Committee, the generators of the tool, have realized

the level of effort required to become fluent with the software and continue to develop a user-friendly package for small school administrators.

Even though larger colleges and universities have more staff, they also are looking for time and person power to address the never ending request for credible information.

We, as facilities and physical plant directors, are placed in positions of continual justifications, return on

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investments, and never-ending utility increases that forever consume our budgets. The major part of our long-range planning is to try to anticipate fiscal needs. In the Core Data Survey, APPA has developed a tool that captures general data that can be shared and compared to support your facilities decisions.



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ARCHIBUS developed the Facilities Performance Indicators Dashboard Reports that translates the survey data into hundreds of easy-to-read gauges.

Precious time and reliable tools make our operations functional. The manager must search for the best tools that make his or her time produce successful results. Our time is our most-valued commodity.

APPA has addressed our needs and welcomes fellow directors to get better results with their time through the Facilities Core Data Survey tool. I urge all small colleges to participate in the next cycle of data collection in August 2007. 🏢



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*-William Wise, Facilities Trade Manager, Colorado College*



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