

# FPI

## Cohort Reports

### California State University System

*By Robert J. Quirk*

**T**he California State University (CSU) system is the largest higher educational system in the United States. The system has physical assets valued at more than \$20 billion (current replacement value) on the “State” side of the house alone. With more than 1,200 buildings, and 50 million square foot of mixed-use space, the CSU facility managers have an enormous responsibility, in addition to extremely high expectations from the stakeholders.

This article will explain how the CSU facilities professionals and administrative staff use the APPA Facilities Performance Indicators (FPI) survey and report for decision making, forecasting, justification of funding levels, and quality improvement. Through years of using the FPI data as a system and refining the information to be ever more reliable, this information provides the basis for the best use of lean public funding.

The CSU is one of the first state university system to establish its own group within the APPA FPI. Led by the Chancellors Office and several progressive campus facility leaders, the group is in its fifth year of participation. Every year, the outputs get better due to a number of factors. The CSU’s facility managers/system have developed a deep and ever growing understanding of, of their funding and staffing levels, how they relate to expectations for quality on each campus and the terminology used in the profession. At least once per year, the CSU group meets to

discuss the process, the need to clarify and/or refine terminology and look for best practices.

The facility leaders ask others in their Carnegie class, in and out of the system, how they do what they do with certain funding levels. In conjunction with other system and campus information and nuances, they discuss strategies for meeting budget challenges, and quality improvement with the use of information and trends as articulated in various forms in the APPA FPI. The level

of knowledge of each CSU campus facility executive and management team has grown over time with the use of this quality program.

#### DATA-DRIVEN SUPPORT

Having this type of information in facilities managers’ “hip pocket” provides empirical data for an unlimited number of situations in which they find themselves. This information has been and is used to discuss productivity and quality outcomes with numerous constituencies: budget committees, policy level administrators, supervisors, managers, staff, and collective bargaining groups.

Intuitively, the campus facilities organizations know they do a good job, but the FPI data provides an impartial tool to verify, if indeed, that we are meeting expectations within the funding and staffing levels provided. It equips facilities representatives with

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evidence and backing to justify funding levels and request funds for growth or defends against reductions. It provides a basis for establishing and modifying task and frequency, as well as planned and preventive maintenance schedules, normalize customer expectations, and support accountability in performance results.

Bringing a higher level of transparency on how you spend agencies and taxpayer's limited funds exposes organizations budgets to a level of scrutiny, to a wider audience, that without participating, may not otherwise be visible. But, by putting in the extra effort and taking the higher road to drive quality and the best decision making, the hard questions should be and need to be answered.

Within this program is information that is generally available in one form or another, sophisticated facilities organizations such as those in the CSU are positioned to use this information as a tool for improvement and have done so successfully. When results do not align with university goals, strategic plans, vision, and expectations, the APPA FPI provides a basis to discover why.

As campuses use the FPI over time, the trends become more meaningful. When discussing appropriate funding levels, it's important to know not only your staffing per gross square feet, or as a percent of your gross institutional budgets, or cost per acre, but also how the density of use of your facilities affect your staffing, cost and quality of services, as well as energy consumption of each campus.


#### ADDITIONAL BENEFITS OF FPI TO CSU

There have been many side benefits of participating in the FPI program as well. Innovative facilities leaders and organizations use this information to establish a basis for cost recovery for leases and special events. An important FPI measurement that has recently been established and is gaining system-wide momentum and understanding is reactive vs. proactive maintenance ratios. The effects of density of the use of space are of particular importance to the CSU system and the impact is routinely part of any staffing discussion.

The transfer of knowledge and intellectual capital is aided with the years of trending data available in the FPI that can be used to understand organizations in more depth. This is particularly more important during a change of leadership in any level of the organization. The questions of where have we been, where are we now, and how can the trends from the past aid in the decision making in the future, can more easily be answered.

#### CSU'S COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE

The commitment to excellence and effective use of the APPA Facilities Performance Indicators is evident in the CSU, as a near unanimous participation of the 23 campuses in a voluntary program, demonstrates the value it has and can deliver. It's easy to get caught up in the day-to-day issues and put quality measures to the side. The CSU facility managers have avoided this pitfall and use the FPI to learn and grow and in many cases be the benchmark to which to strive.

In their transparency, credibility, and quest to improve, the CSU facilities organizations are in a position to further align themselves with campus and system strategic objects and make decisions that best serve all of the interested parties. 

Rob Quirk is an APPA member emeritus working as an FPI consultant to the California State University System. He is based in Long Beach, CA and can be reached at [robertjquirk@gmail.com](mailto:robertjquirk@gmail.com).



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