

Transforming Facilities to Achieve

Student Success

2017



PART 1

Section 1: *Executive Summary*

The year was 1973. The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education released a comprehensive report summarizing six years of investigating colleges and universities across the United States. Higher education was facing unprecedented challenges, including changing social norms and turmoil over the Vietnam War. One of the most pressing concerns, however, was very familiar to audiences today: money.

Students were flocking to degree programs at unheard-of rates, and institutions were struggling to keep up. The commission predicted a nationwide shortfall of \$26 billion a year by 1980 if enrollment trends continued. What to do?

“Weed ’em out,” the commission said.

“Encouraging higher educational institutions to use their resources more effectively, the commission report proposes that ‘reluctant attenders’ should be encouraged to leave,” reported *The New York Times*. Pushing less-than-enthusiastic students out the door could slash nearly \$10 billion—roughly 20 percent—of annual costs.

Other recommendations of the Carnegie Commission wouldn’t be out of place in a report written today—the commission called for institutions to clarify their purposes, preserve and enhance quality, and achieve more

effective governance. But the charge to show students the door is almost shocking in 2017.

It's not clear how the commission identified "reluctant attenders," but it's not hard to imagine many were students struggling to adapt to higher education. Today, institutions recognize their responsibility is **not to weed out, but to invite in**. What's more, today's colleges and universities are taking seriously the charge to help all students succeed.

Fostering student success in higher education

In April 2017, representatives of colleges and universities from across the United States and Canada assembled at the APPA Thought Leaders symposium to discuss the topic of student success. Attendees included senior campus leaders and representatives of academic affairs, student affairs, and facilities organizations. They debated broad trends and issues confronting higher education and considered how institutions can help students succeed.

Success is a complex term, and participants at the symposium struggled to define it. Success starts with retention and graduation, but it can expand to include factors from personal career goals to social responsibility. However success is defined, **colleges and universities recognize that they have a responsibility to prepare students to succeed**, and they are investing in programs and projects to help identify at-risk students, improve academic support, and expand student services.

The primary question of the symposium was **how the facilities organization can help further the success of every student**. The APPA members represented at the symposium—all dedicated members of the broader campus community—believe they have a crucial role to play in fostering success. Without safe, clean, functional spaces, education cannot thrive. Participants at the symposium identified the following priorities for the facilities organization:

- Address the basics.
- Create a student-focused built environment.
- Support the academic goals of the institution.

- Strive for inclusivity and fairness.
- Integrate technology.
- Promote sustainability.
- Serve as good stewards of campus resources.
- Engage students in the facilities organization.
- Do no harm.

Thought Leaders participants recognized that, all too often, facilities get in the way of student success when campus buildings fail. The high cost of upkeep of aging structures, many constructed during the boom of the 1960s and 1970s when the Carnegie Commission was active, has left many buildings in disrepair. Outdated heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, leaking roofs, and unreliable elevators plague campuses. **Students don't learn well next to buckets positioned to catch dripping rain.**

No institution has the funds to fix every pesky detail of every building, but colleges and universities are finding ways to make strategic investments in their existing buildings through **facilities revitalization and modernization**. This approach uses capital funds to revive, renovate, and reset the clock on campus buildings. It is a forward-thinking process that can encompass a range of tasks including maintenance (i.e., fixing leaks or repairing infrastructure) and programmatic updates (i.e., renovating classrooms to address changing pedagogy). The goal is to thoughtfully target reinvestment in existing assets to extend their life and revitalize their role on campus.

It is important to differentiate revitalization and modernization from the old—and utterly exhausted—term "deferred maintenance." The concept of deferred maintenance may have been useful once, but at this point it only serves to prompt a rash of finger-pointing. Most facilities leaders have come to dread the phrase, which smacks of failure on their part of maintain their campuses and discounts the hard work they have done to keep colleges and universities running smoothly. It is time to shift the focus away from backlogs of repairs and instead consider the goals of the institution.

This is a key message of this report: that **through strategic investment in their facilities, colleges and**

universities can support student success, position the campus for the future, and serve as good stewards of campus assets. Thought Leaders participants agreed on the importance of an approach to campus facilities investments that is student-centered and future-focused. The process must reflect the mission and vision of the campus—the objective is to make the greatest impact possible on the college or university’s goals.

Achieving success through collaboration

Undertaking a facilities modernization program involves years of effort from facilities leaders and requires the backing of the campus community. Without strong support from departments across the entire campus, modernization efforts will founder.

Gaining support while identifying the needs and goals of campus leaders demands a collaborative process. For help understanding effective collaboration, the Thought Leaders symposium turned to the Arbinger Institute, whose process emphasizes an outward mindset that recognizes the goals and priorities of others. Crafting a collaborative facilities modernization program not only helps the facilities organization achieve its goals, it also helps the entire institution achieve broader goals and move toward student success. Symposium participants outlined strategies for creating a collaborative facilities modernization program and examined ways to make the entire facilities organization more collaborative.

The symposium concluded with participants developing a list of self-assessment questions. APPA encourages facilities organizations in particular, and college and university leaders in general, to consider these questions as they seek to support the success of their students:

1. How does our institution define student success? How can the facilities organization specifically support student success at our college or university?
2. How does facilities revitalization and modernization contribute to student success?
3. How is the facilities organization a barrier to supporting student success?
4. How will investment in modernization support long-term institutional success?
5. Where do we start in making our processes more collaborative? What is our plan for adopting a collaborative approach to facilities revitalization in particular?
6. How do we select and engage stakeholders in a collaborative modernization process?
7. How do we prioritize modernization needs?
8. How do we establish and maintain discipline in the facilities renewal and revitalization process?
9. How do we say “no” without alienating those who have partnered in collaboration?
10. How do we communicate the risk of using capital dollars for work that does not further modernization?

When the Carnegie Commission wrote its report nearly 45 years ago, higher education was very different than it is today. Perhaps it’s not surprising that institutions, overwhelmed by a deluge of students, wanted to turn some of them away. But by 1973, the doors of higher education had been thrown wide open, and it was too late, even then, to slam them shut again.

Today, colleges and universities are not only propping open the doors, they are waving from the front steps. Once students are inside, colleges and universities are finding concrete, creative ways to help students thrive. As caretakers of the structures of higher education, facilities organization leaders will continue to do their part to support students as they reach their goals and proceed to their futures—well-prepared for whatever comes next.

Section 2:

Improving Student Success in Higher Education

Student success and the big picture of higher education in 2017

Student success has become a top priority for colleges and universities. There's an air of urgency around the topic—a sense that institutions have an imperative to better support their students. One way to understand the issue is to place it in the context of two colliding crises in higher education: increased demand for a degree and reduced state support for colleges and universities.

Not so long ago, a degree from a college or university was a rare achievement. Today, **Americans without a degree are hard-pressed to support their families.** Of the 11.6 million jobs created after the Great Recession of 2008, 8.4 million went to those with at least a bachelor's degree, according to the Center on Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University. Another 3 million jobs went to individuals with an associate's degree or some college education. The long-term financial payoff for a degree is enormous: People with a bachelor's degree earn 40 percent more over the course of their lives than those with a high school diploma. It is difficult to overstate the significance of this societal shift. Until the early 1980s, more than 70 percent of Americans entered the workforce right out of high school.

At the same time, **public support of higher education has declined precipitously across the United States.** Most states are contributing less to public colleges and universities than they did before the recession. While state support for higher education increased slightly in 2016¹, it has yet to recover from a high point in 2008, according to research by the advocacy group Young Invincibles reported in *U.S. News and World Report*. Colleges and universities turned to families to make up the difference, and so tuition has soared, dragging student debt along with it. Average undergraduate debt for the class of 2015 is a staggering \$30,100, according to the Institute of College Access and Success. (This figure

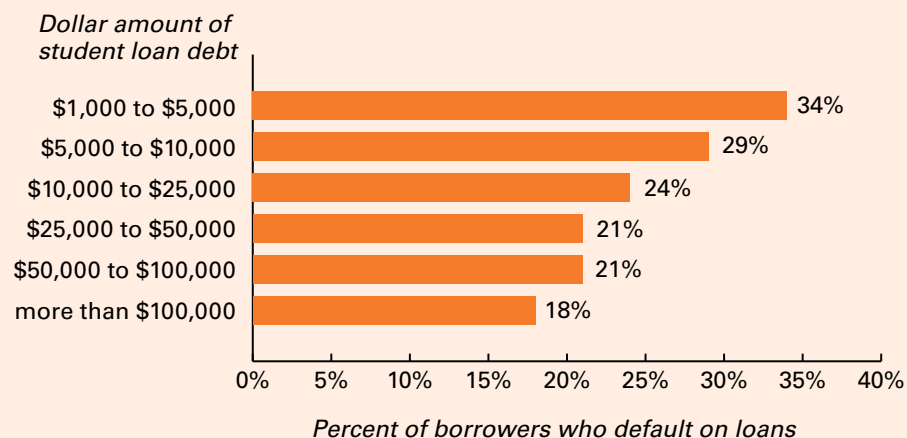
might actually be much higher, since it does not include debt for students who attended for-profit institutions.)

These two crises have focused attention as never before on student success. The need for an education has never been greater, and the cost to the individual student has never been higher. To shortchange students attempting to secure their place in the middle class—and often finding themselves in debt before earning their first paycheck—is irresponsible. Colleges and universities have a **social and ethical imperative** to help their students succeed.

And yet too often, students fail. Around 61 percent of full-time undergraduates enrolled in public colleges and universities graduate with a degree in six years; the rate is 66 percent for students at private nonprofit institutions, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. **That leaves roughly a third of students with some college experience but no degree, and often with significant debt.** The situation is far worse at public community colleges, where only 22 percent of full-time students complete a degree or certificate within four years.

These students have not only failed to accomplish what they set out to do, they also are far more likely to struggle to pay back the debt they acquired in the attempt. While it's shocking to learn about students who have borrowed hundreds of thousands of dollars, those students generally make steady progress paying back their

1 The actual situation is difficult to summarize. According to the *2016 State Higher Education Finance* report from the State Higher Education Executive Officers, overall support for higher education fell by 1.8 percent per full-time equivalent student in 2016. However, the nationwide average is dragged down by Illinois, where a budget crisis forced appropriations to drop by 80 percent from 2015. Eliminate Illinois from nationwide calculations, and overall support increased by 3.2 percent. Support rose in 33 states and declined in 17.

Data Point:**Understanding the student loan crisis****Low debt, high default**

On the surface, it would be much harder to pay back \$100,000 than \$5,000—but not without a college degree. In fact, the higher the debt, the more likely it is to be paid back, since those who have borrowed significant sums most likely land well-paying jobs in medicine or law.

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of New York Consumer Credit Panel and Equifax, *The New York Times*. Data represent graduate and undergraduate borrowers who left school in 2009 and defaulted by 2014.

loans. They likely either graduated from well-regarded institutions or completed graduate degrees, and their income is higher as a result. Only 7 percent of graduate-school borrowers default. Conversely, **borrowers with the smallest debts are the most likely to default.**

In one 2015 study of students from Iowa's 16 community colleges by the Association of Community College Trustees, the default rate for students who had borrowed less than \$5,000 was nearly 32 percent. (Nationally, the rate is slightly higher, at 34 percent.)

Why is it so difficult for low-borrowing students to keep up with payments? Because they likely never completed a degree. Almost 90 percent of Iowa community college defaulters left college with no degree or certificate, and 60 percent had fewer than 15 credits. Less than a semester's worth of credit is unlikely to increase a student's income at all, and that \$5,000 debt could haunt them for decades.

There is a growing sense that **institutions must help their students avoid the pitfalls of the current higher**

education environment. Campus leaders are compelled to aid students in reaching their potential—to graduate on time, with as little debt as possible, and with the qualifications that will enable them to repay that debt and secure a future.

Moreover, **society as a whole is pressuring institutions to better serve their students.** Accreditation is beginning to be tied to student success (although the accreditation agencies generally have not defined success or explained how success will be measured). What's more, many states have linked some percentage of funding to metrics such as retention, graduation, and job placement. There is clear logic in rewarding effective institutions with higher funding, but such programs have often failed to achieve their goals, according to a study by the Century Foundation. "Research shows that tying financial incentives to performance measures rarely results in large or positive outcomes that are sustained over time." In this study, states that use performance-based funding do not outperform other states; any differences between them are statistically insignificant.

Why is this the case? Paying for performance is highly successful in many other economic situations, but, as the report points out, those are generally fairly straightforward transactions. **The reasons any student thrives or fails are complex and multifaceted and involve numerous factors outside the institution's control.** There is no single, clear path institutions can take to improve results. Certainly, institutions can—and have—identified many of the factors that contribute to success, and they are working to improve those factors.

Ineffective academic advising is a good example—poor advising can delay time to graduation by failing to help students keep their focus on their end goal. Many campuses are seeking to improve advising and are seeing real results, according to the Association for the Study of Higher Education report, *Piecing Together the Student Success Puzzle: Research, Propositions, and Recommendations*.

Another major challenge in tying student success to state funding comes down to definitions. What do we mean by “success”? How do we measure it?

Data Point:

Defining student success

San Jose State University

San Jose State University (SJSU) works actively and collaboratively to help students identify and strive toward their maximum potential, whether it leads to an SJSU degree or not. San Jose State University's student success framework provides a rich and diverse learning environment to engage students not only in mastering core subject areas but also in developing and refining their competencies in creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, quantitative literacy, information literacy, communication, and collaboration. The ultimate goal of our student success efforts is to produce citizens who possess intellectual, social, and life skills that are adaptable, culturally respectful, transformative, productive, and responsible.

The challenge of defining success

So far, we've discussed “student success” without defining it. Sometimes, success is presented as shorthand for graduation; at other times, it is presumed to encompass much more. But operating without a definition is a problem. The old adage “You can't manage what you can't measure” comes to mind—because you can't measure what you can't define. **Individual institutions need to decide what they mean by success** so they can determine if they're making progress toward improving it.

During the 2017 APPA Thought Leaders symposium, participants were asked to give their own definitions of success. Some definitions were straightforward and, therefore, would be relatively easy to measure:

- Maximum throughput in shortest time with highest graduation rate.
- Graduate on time. Increase income over lifetime of employment, over alternative of not attending college. Improve standard of living.

Others wanted to emphasize the personal nature of success:

- Student graduates “on time” based on their individual goal. Student acquires the knowledge, experience, and growth that he/she desired.

Many wanted success to include a societal component, with the assumption that higher education has a broader purpose than training students for careers:

- Student success is preparing an individual to be a productive member of society by educating them so that they can get a job, continuously educate themselves to understand current events, and value other perspectives.

And some framed success in the broadest terms:

- Student success is graduating with a degree and the life skills to be an enlightened contributor to society. It's making considered decisions and taking productive steps in life's journey. It's looking back at your educational experience with no regrets.

- Student success is full, rewarding emotional, personal, intellectual, societal, and academic development leading to timely matriculation and an academic degree coupled with key tools to acquiring future success/fulfillment.

The two statements above are highly ambitious and inspiring in their vision for higher education—and difficult to prove with a data set.

Thought Leader participants aren't the first and won't be the last to struggle with a definition of student success. Campuses across the country have held long, difficult meetings to hammer out definitions for their institutions; in fact, we're presenting many of those definitions as examples throughout this report.

Education experts have also penned reports considering the topic of student success; a few points merit attention.

First, while definitions of student success general include graduation, the **definition of success will vary widely** by institution. Attempts to hold all institutions, even all public institutions within a single state, to the same success standards will be difficult to achieve, since a state flagship campus operates in a very different environment than a small institution in a rural region.

Second, the goal of success sometimes comes into conflict with another major goal of many institutions: access. **The more open the admission standards of a college or university, the lower its retention rate**, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. (Retention is defined as the percentage of students who return to the same institution for a second year.) Community colleges and many public institutions were created with the goal of making higher education available to as many students as possible. Unfortunately, those who are least prepared for higher education are also those most likely to fail to complete a degree. Institutions with open admission see a retention rate of only 51 percent; more selective colleges and universities have a 76 percent retention rate.

Finally, most higher education leaders believe that **the quality of education matters, not simply the quantity**. It would be easier if success were defined only by retention and graduation rates. It would also be tempting, in that case, to reduce coursework demands, simplify degree programs, run everyone through with an A or B, and graduate students in four years whether they had learned anything or not. The leaders of our colleges and universities are serious people who believe in the responsibility of higher education, and most reject a narrow view that makes a degree and a job the sole measures of success. Therefore, a definition of success shouldn't be dismissed because it includes difficult-to-measure elements. Otherwise, ill-considered reward systems could end up elevating degree mills over thoughtful institutions.

Keeping all these points in mind, is it possible to develop a unified theory of student success?

Data Point:

Defining student success

University of Iowa

The definition of student success varies between individual students. However, in general, it includes several components, each of which contributes to a student's personal measure of their success. We take a holistic, or broad, approach to defining and supporting student success. Student success can be:

- Reaching academic goals.
- Social, personal, and emotional development.
- Appreciating diverse perspectives and developing a clearer sense of personal identity.
- Displaying resiliency and engaging in help-seeking behaviors.
- Developing a sense of belonging and ownership
- Financial literacy and stability.

Most institutions would generally agree that success encompasses some of the following elements:

- **Retention or persistence**—Entering students remain, re-enroll, and continue their education.
- **Graduation or attainment**—Students reach their education goals, whether a certificate or a degree. They move through their program in a timely manner.
- **Advancement**—Students succeed at subsequent endeavors (whatever those might be) and progress toward the next step in their degree plans or work in their desired field.

- **Achievement**—Students achieve satisfactory levels of academic performance.
- **Personal development**—Students grow as individuals, advancing intellectually, socially, and ethically.
- **Social engagement and civic responsibility**—Students are equipped to become good citizens of their community, their country, and the world.

It's not a perfect list, and not everyone will agree with every element, but it captures the broad outlines of meanings proposed by participants at the Thought Leaders symposium. It will serve as a working definition of "student success" for the purpose of this report.

Data Point:

Student success

Four trends that drive success identified by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Colleges and universities across the country are under enormous pressure to transform themselves to meet the needs of today's students. Is this transformation possible, and if so, what does it look like in successful institutions?

- **Laser-like focus on students.** Everyone—faculty, administrators, and advisors—knows their students. They study them, they understand their needs and aspirations, and they build educational, coaching, mentoring, and counseling services tailored to their students' needs.
- **Professional development for faculty and advisors.** Driven by the integration of technology, institutions support and encourage routine engagement of their faculty and advisors with learning science and with best practices in instruction, coaching, and mentoring.
- **Data analysis.** Institutions evolve their practices, gathering data about students, finding out where they are struggling in their courses, why and at

what points they are slipping behind or dropping out, and experimenting with innovations that target those friction points. The continuing quest after improvement is scientific and intensely data-driven.

- **Courageous leadership.** Evolving traditional academic practices so they meet the needs of today's students is a complex and challenging process. It requires a willingness to explore new cost and revenue models and a commitment to supporting the professional development and training of dedicated experts working in fields undergoing fundamental transformation. What's more, it calls for a combination of patience (because fundamental change takes time) and urgency (because today's students cannot wait for us to address their needs tomorrow).

Source: Adapted from Daniel Greenstein, director of education for postsecondary success, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, "4 Trends that Drive Success in Higher Education," World Economic Forum, December 2, 2014.

Case Study in Facilities Modernization: Wellesley College

Wellesley College was founded in 1870 by a group of educators passionate about higher education for women. While investment had been made over the decades to the historic campus, by 2010, college leaders recognized the need to address both maintenance and programmatic needs. “There was a realization that the campus did not meet the needs of today,” says Dave Chakraborty, chief facilities officer and assistant vice president for facilities management and planning. “So the campus kicked off a three-year process to develop a plan for improvements.”

The planning process was highly collaborative, reflecting the character of the institution. “A vast cross-section of faculty and staff were involved,” says Chakraborty. Initially, the college outlined a highly ambitious program of improvements—a program that actually turned out to be too ambitious. Running the numbers revealed it would cost more than \$1 billion. Leaders went back to the drawing board and crafted a more feasible \$575 million plan.

The end result was *Wellesley 2025: A Plan for Campus Renewal*. This plan charts a multiyear approach to campus modernization and incorporates academic, residential, athletic, and dining plans. Goals identified by the campus community include:

- Enabling academic initiatives and improvements to student life and providing opportunities for collaboration and community-building.
- Meeting current and anticipated program needs, with enough flexibility to accommodate evolution of programs and pedagogies.
- Facilitating stewardship of Wellesley’s rich heritage of buildings and landscape and—in particular—securing the longevity of its existing buildings.
- Building on and enhancing sustainability initiatives throughout the campus.
- Improving accessibility throughout campus.

- Considering the campus as an embodiment of a forward-thinking college with a rich history and meaningful traditions, emphasizing both preservation and innovation.

Several projects have reached completion. For example, Pendleton West, which houses fine arts programs, hadn’t been updated since it was constructed in 1936. The interior of the building was completely demolished and features a new layout, updated heating and cooling systems, and improved ventilation for hazardous art materials. Classroom spaces were designed with the flexibility to adapt to future needs.

Other projects are ongoing—a new science building is in the design stage, and residential life improvements will be addressed in the next five to seven years. The college has also recognized outstanding needs that will not be met by the 2025 plan and are discussing options for infrastructure and building improvements that will need to be tackled once this plan (which will probably extend beyond its original deadline to 2030) is complete.

The Wellesley 2025 plan has been embraced by the college community. None of the faculty or staff feels like “losers” in the modernization program, or resent that others are “winners.” Chakraborty credits the provost and other senior leaders of the college for “ensuring that everyone was heard—and seriously heard.” Leaders took seriously the input of the community. “Nothing was done in a back room,” he says. “Certainly this approach takes much longer, but in the end the right decisions were made.”

Kim Bottomly, president of Wellesley College from 2007-2016, said of the modernization at Wellesley, “Each generation at Wellesley has the great responsibility of stewarding our lovely campus buildings. We have inherited these buildings from those who came before us, and we must take care of our spaces, anticipating future needs, so that they serve Wellesley well into the future.”

Section 3: *The Role of Facilities in Fostering Student Success*

If the goal is student success, how are institutions to realize it? What is the role of facilities in student success?

The facilities organization is rarely part of the discussion of student success. However, **a student's experience on campus can be significantly enhanced, or diminished, by the facilities themselves.** How well a space is designed, operated, and maintained shapes the user's experience in that environment.

Participants at the Thought Leaders symposium believed that facilities have a critical role in student success. Understanding that role can help senior facilities officers target their efforts to improve student outcomes.

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Data Point:

Defining student success

California State University

At the California State University (CSU), we work every day to help ensure one thing for our more than 474,000 students: **the timely completion of a rigorous, quality degree in preparation for a lifetime of achievement.**

- Student success means improving graduation rates and ensuring more students get a degree sooner.
- Student success means reducing the number of students who drop out of college before graduating.
- Student success means making college more affordable to more Californians.
- Student success means helping more prospective students understand what it takes to earn their degree.

How the facilities organization supports students

Address the basics. Fundamentally, the facilities organization is charged with ensuring that campus spaces are safe, accessible, clean, and functional.

Create a student-focused built environment. The campus can be an imposing and confusing space, especially for students who may have never set foot in a college or university before. The campus needs to be examined with the eyes of a total outsider and made easy to navigate for every student.

Support the academic goals of the institution. Pedagogy changes faster than architecture. The facilities organization needs to understand where the institution is headed in terms of teaching and learning styles and work with their academic counterparts to create appropriate learning environments.

Strive for inclusivity and fairness. Achieving Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards is part of the baseline for facilities, but beyond that, the campus should be designed and operated so that all students can participate fully in the life of the institution.

Integrate technology. A close partnership with IT will help the facilities organization make spaces as usable as possible.

Promote sustainability. Facilities should continue to make strides in greening campus operations and reducing the carbon footprint of the college or university.

Serve as good stewards of campus resources. The facilities organization controls a major portion of the campus budget and can demonstrate responsible use of resources to a wide audience.

Engage students in the facilities organization. More and more facilities organizations are reaching out directly to students. Sometimes the goal is improved communications—facilities staff use Facebook and Twitter to keep students up to date on facilities projects. Other departments hire students as interns. Senior facilities officers teach courses in engineering, architecture, or environmental programs. Some schools have found ways to make their campuses into living labs where students can understand the real-world effect of decisions about space management, utilities use, and other critical facilities factors. Working with other departments gives the facilities organization allies across the campus.

Data Point:

Supporting success through facilities

Designing classrooms for modern pedagogy

Ninety-nine percent of teaching spaces were anticipated either in an image of an ancient Syrian palace school 4,000 years ago or in the Greek amphitheater: rows or rings of seats meant to focus the attention of the many on the one. But education is not about transferring information from one to many; it is about learning within the student. When printed books were new, transferring information was vital, but today, information is ubiquitous and readily available, and students can pick it up when and where they want. Instead, the classroom ought to focus on assimilation and application of knowledge to new contexts. The teacher becomes the guide on the side, instead of the sage on the stage, requiring wholly new learning spaces and teaching techniques.

Source: Eric Mazur, Balkanski professor of physics and applied physics, Harvard University, quoted in Lawson Reed Wilson, Jr., *Classroom Design*, Prepared for the Special Committee on Classroom Design, Princeton University, Summer 2013.

Do no harm. Facilities projects can be disruptive to a busy campus, but the organization can take steps to minimize that disruption. The goal should be to stay out of the way as much as possible and to be conscious of the experience of students and faculty.

The view from different disciplines

The 2017 Thought Leaders symposium sought the input of leaders from different corners of the campus as participants considered the role of facilities in student success. Alongside senior facilities officers, representatives from academics and student services were on hand to contribute. The distinct groups had different insights on how facilities can best contribute to student success.

Academic representatives emphasized the student experience. They urged facilities leaders to try to see spaces from the perspective of students who might be new to college and university life. **“Facilities need to meet students where they are,”** one academic expert noted. “Navigating campus can be really difficult, but students don’t want to ask questions. How can we help those students find their way?”

They also encouraged facilities to **give students agency**. “Let them shape the space,” one person said. Academic representatives discussed spaces in which students can move the tables and chairs and write all over whiteboard-covered walls. At the same time, facilities should set expectations and encourage students to take responsibility for their spaces.

Finally, academic representatives encouraged senior facilities staff to **make a place for themselves on campus as experts**. “You’re our resident expert—a real resource,” observed one academic expert. “Facilities staff can be invisible, just taking care of things behind the scenes. But you know things we don’t. We need to hear what you have to say.”

Data Point:

Defining student success

South Dakota State University

Student success is defined as supporting student achievement to develop graduates who have a high level of self-confidence, are professionally competent, and are prepared to assume leadership roles in their communities as well as their chosen discipline.

The facilities organization has **insights that the rest of the campus needs**, said student affairs leaders. “You understand how spaces work—or don’t work. There’s a sort of anthropology of how people use campus spaces that facilities understands.” This is particularly significant in designing new spaces. Often, campus leaders know the outcome they want for a space, but only facilities leaders know how to achieve that outcome.

Student affairs representatives encouraged facilities staff to think in terms of **breaking down barriers and promoting a safe environment**. “That means all kinds of barriers—both physical barriers that might be limiting access to someone with a disability and more subtle barriers limiting collaboration,” one student affairs expert

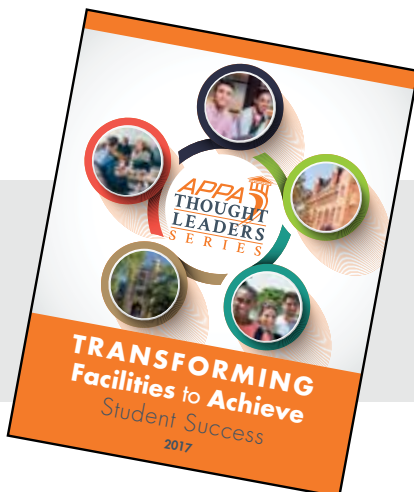
noted. “Our physical space needs to reflect our values of open interaction.”

Facilities play an **essential role in campus safety and security**, the group emphasized. Elements such as lighting, open sightlines, and monitoring systems can enhance the security of students, faculty, and staff. “We need to get facilities staff more involved in the passive measures that keep students safe, like clear lighting for walkways,” observed one student services representative.

Finally, student affairs experts noted that **facilities staff sometimes play an unexpectedly large role in students’ lives**. “Sometimes, the custodian in a residence hall is the first person to notice that a student hasn’t been out of their room in days—that there’s some kind of a mental health problem,” said one symposium participant. “We need to make sure that these people, who are on the ground interacting with students, have a way to report their concerns.”

Ultimately, the message from academic and student affairs dovetailed with what facilities experts themselves believe: Facilities support student success every day. Investments in the physical campus return rewards in successful students.

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Look for Part 2 of this series in the November/December 2017 issue of *Facilities Manager*. Download the full report at www.appa.org/bookstore.