

Getting the Most out of APPA's FPI Survey and Report Tool—And a Preview of What's to Come

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Presently, the APPA Facilities Performance Indicators (FPI) survey includes over 350 institutions that participate on an annual basis using the full survey or express survey options. Many of these institutions have been multi-year participants and “true believers.” Fred Plant, the retired executive director of physical plant at Valparaiso University has stated that “[t]he FPI has always been an effective means for one to mark areas of needed attention and/or to identify those aspects that are going well by looking at one’s own data year to year and by comparing to benchmark institutions.”

So the question is: Why aren’t all colleges and universities using the FPI and/or participating every year? The common answer from senior facilities officers: “It’s a lot of work just to fill out the survey!” And, “What’s the ROI!?” (sounding much like their institution’s chief financial officer).

THE POWER OF THE FPI

At a popular session at this year’s APPA/PCAPPA/BayAPPA conference, the value of the APPA FPI and what it can be used for was front and center. First and foremost, as facilities professionals, we are being asked some key questions regarding our value proposition for our institutions. They are struggling with many challenges, many of which directly relate to and impact facilities, including:

- Unreasonably high overhead costs
- Substandard classes and teachers
- Inconvenience of time and place
- Pricing competition

This year’s APPA Thought Leaders symposium focused on “Transforming Facilities to Achieve Student

Success,” [see Part 1 in this issue]. A key question when addressing these challenges and trying to leverage any college or university’s facilities toward student success is, “How are we doing?” The APPA FPI provides these answers across the full range of any facility organization’s portfolio, and its power lies in its ability to help institutions measure and assess their progress year to year and area to area, but even more, across all areas of effort in order to meet their overall objectives.

UNLEASHING THAT POWER

Those colleges or universities using the FPI to its fullest have moved from asking, “Are we spending enough on our facilities portfolio?” to asking, “Is our institutional portfolio appropriate for the delivery of our mission?” To do this, institutions move from how they are doing in a key metric like Annual Facility Operating Expenditure (AFOE) as a percentage of Current Replacement Value (CRV), and start to look at one metric in comparison to other metrics, such as AFOE against Student Full-Time Equivalent (SFTE) and AFOE as a percentage of Gross Institutional Expenditure (GIE), to bring a fuller picture of what is happening in their organizations. Further, these institutions also start focusing less on what others are doing (e.g., benchmarking against others), and look at year-over-year progress, not only in facilities, but across the college or university so as to demonstrate how they, as facilities professionals, are able to make the big impacts needed for their institution.



WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE FPI

Thanks to help from the APPA Facilities Informatics (FI) Work Group, we are contemplating some significant changes in a new version of the survey: "FPI 2.0." This begins by using a framework of how to guide institutions as they work to improve their facilities organizations.

Published last year, the *APPA Facilities Informatics Maturity Matrix Technical Report* (see Figure

1) provides that guidance by helping institutions understand how to gather, interpret, and apply data sources in order to make the best possible decisions and be proactive about their growth (the report is available at the APPA Bookstore).

As a result, the next version of the FPI is going to start with leveraging existing data sources such as the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), the National Science Foundation Survey of

Figure 1: Excerpts from the APPA Facilities Informatics Maturity Matrix Technical Report

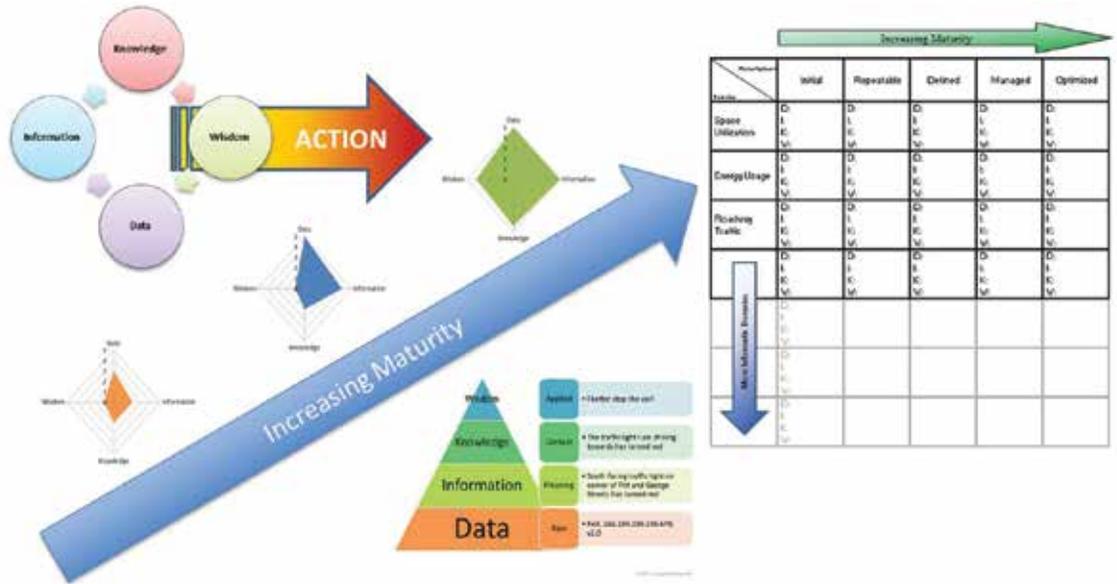
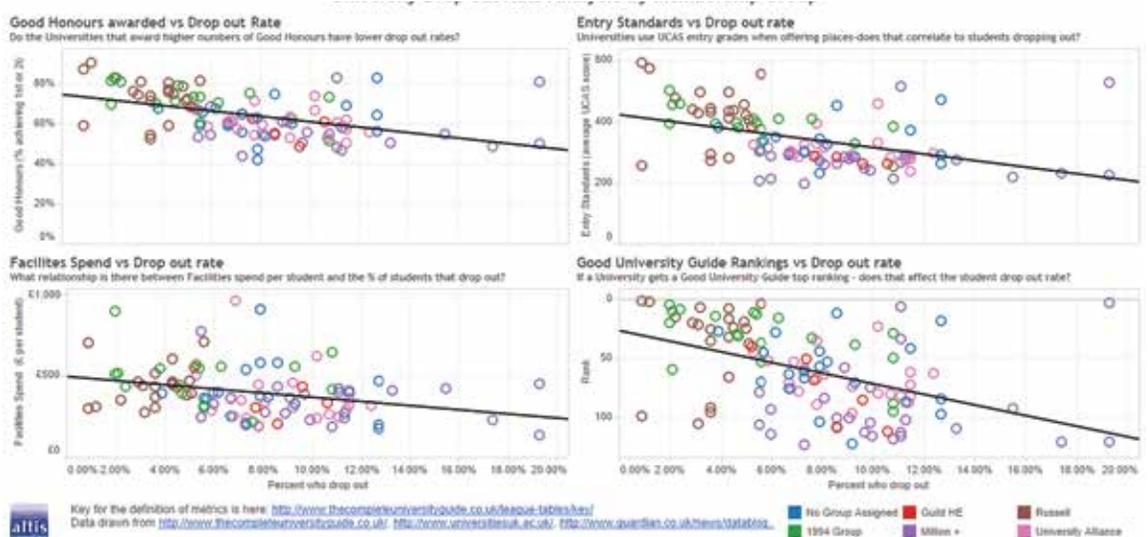


Figure 2: University Dropout Rate Analysis by Membership Group



Retrieved from Tableau public, 16 July 2017 (<https://public.tableau.com/en-us/s/gallery>)

Science and Engineering Research Facilities (SERF), and your institution's IRS Form 990.

To do this, efforts are being made to develop a way to "auto load" this data (which is already being submitted by your institution to these data warehouses) into the APPA FPI, and give participants the opportunity to correct and validate this information as part of the survey cycle. If you're unfamiliar with these other reporting systems, this may be the perfect time to find out who at your campus submits the data and to learn how it is used.

Speaking of the survey cycle, it is hoped that the "FPI 2.0" database will be constantly updatable, enabling continuous submission as well as ongoing updates, while reporting out within certain predefined time frames to give participants snapshots that can aid in making comparisons with the past.

Finally, to make the survey even more useful, the next generation of the FPI will feature dashboards and visualization tools that will equip facility managers to better see their progress, work to improve their facilities and facility operations on an ongoing basis, and tell their story (in language that makes sense both inside and outside facilities organizations, thanks to APPA's partnership with NACUBO, the National Association of College and University Business Officers). Being able to show such things as how much your institution is spending on its facilities (AFOE) in relation to the dropout rate (see Figure 2) of students helps you to not only have a seat at the table, but to literally be the builder of that table for the mission of your institution.

CONCLUSION

The APPA FPI already brings value to participating institutions by helping them see their own pathway and the pathways that their peers are taking. "FPI 2.0" will raise the bar and provide even better ROI, by: 1) making it easier to complete through auto loading of data, 2) enabling survey participation on an ongoing basis, and 3) providing tools that allow you to show what you are doing better, and doing in ways that will have greater impact on the overall mission of your college or university, as well as your facilities and

their operations in the future. With that knowledge, you'll have a much better picture of the road ahead. ☺

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