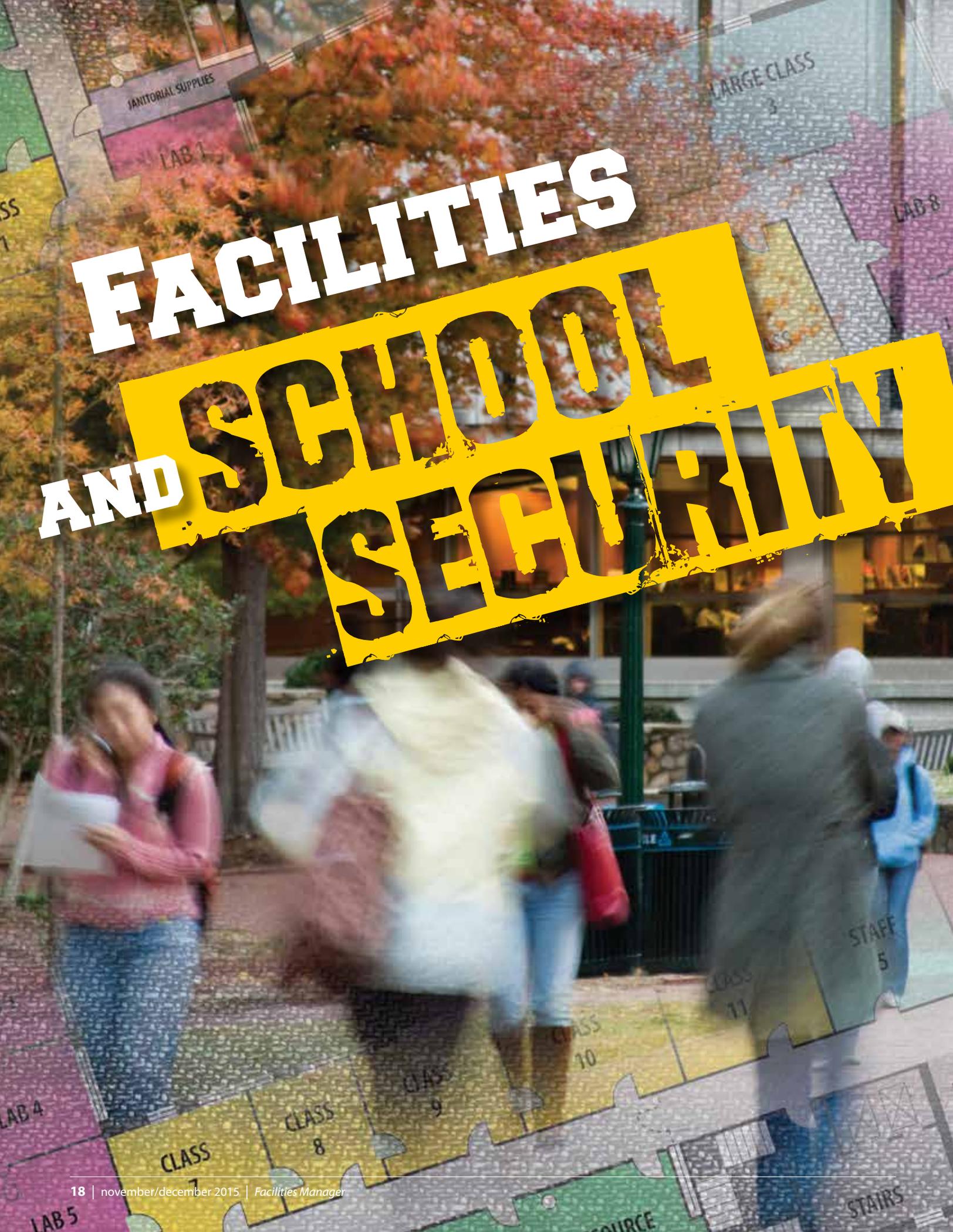


FACILITIES AND SCHOOL SECURITY





BY KEITH WOODWARD

THE moment a 17- or 18-year-old freshman arrives on our respective campuses, the expectation of the parents, many of whom are sending their child off to live outside of their home for the first time, is that we in facilities (and our collective collegiate colleagues) are prepared to care for them. Some things are relatively simple, including heat, electricity (lots of it for all of their devices), clean bathrooms, safe beds, working laundry machines, and good study space.

While the tragic events of Umpqua Community College, Virginia Tech, and too many other campuses bring realities that some parents inquire about during open houses, others assume that colleges, universities, and schools are prepared. Lessons learned are readily available on the Web, and most states require colleges and universities to submit plans to the Department of Homeland Security or an equivalent state governing body. The truth is that the majority of educational institutions *are* much better prepared than they were last year or the year before. But is your facilities department better prepared? Stop. It's worth asking again. Is your facilities department prepared?

THE ROLE OF FACILITIES IN AN EMERGENCY

Emergency management plans in higher education are not simply boxes you can check off as done and put them on the shelf. Attendance at one training session three years ago does not mean that you can check the box as "I'm all set." All colleges and universities should have an integrated emergency management plan that facilities departments are both represented in and aware of. Many facilities managers are asking staff to achieve 200-level training on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's National Incident Management System (NIMS). Does the staff under your leadership know what to do?

The facilities department as a business unit was never more evident under the emergency management spotlight than at the opening session at APPA 2015 in

Chicago last August. Natalie Hammond (Sandy Hook Elementary), Kristina Anderson (Virginia Tech), and Frank DeAngelis (Columbine High School) spoke for 90 minutes about their experiences when an active shooter showed up at their institutions. Attendees were left with little option but to manage their own emotions upon listening to them recount what were perhaps the most challenging moments of their lives.

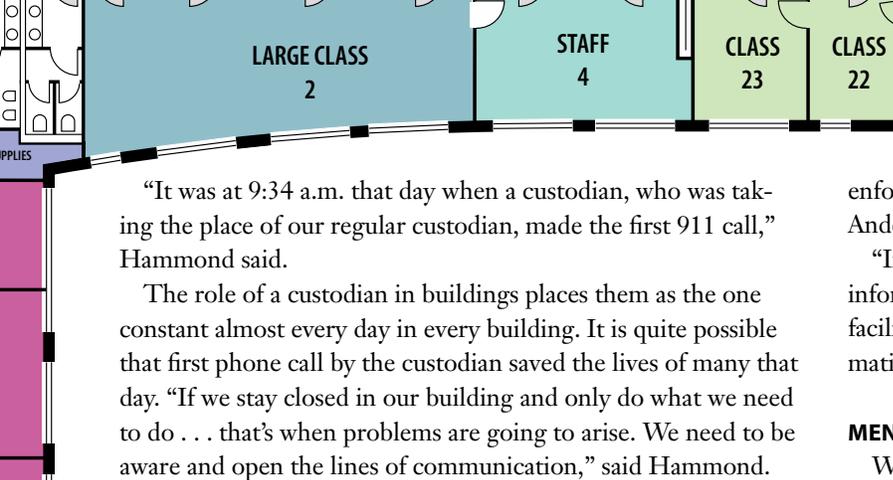
Frank DeAngelis spent more than three decades as principal of Columbine High School, Columbine, Colorado, before retiring in July 2014 from the same position he held on that infamous day of April 20, 1999. He exuded passion for his school in Columbine. Educational institutions were in a different place 16 years ago. Think how far we have come since 1999, when law enforcement officials asked an academic leader to put on a bulletproof vest to help first responders, police, and SWAT teams enter a building to navigate floor plans, shut off the fire alarm system, and find the shooters.

"What happens if you need to shut off the gas valve or ventilation system? What people on your team know what to do? What happens if I wasn't there or my facilities manager wasn't there? Do my assistant principals know what they need to do?" asked DeAngelis. "I think it's so important when you are coming up with these plans that you have the right people sitting at the table. You could have the best laid out plans, but you don't know how people are going to respond during a situation when bullets are being fired." Who from your facilities operations has instant access to floor plans, building alarms, and exits? Are you communicating that to the public safety/security chief?

DeAngelis told conference attendees, "The one piece of advice you need to go back and tell administrators of facilities . . . people often feel if they don't talk about [active shooter situations], it's not going to happen, and that's a disservice [to your institution]." When you hear those words from a man who had a gun pointed at him, it brings a perspective few can challenge.

If an event like this happens on your campus, it is probably not going to be law enforcement that is in the building at the moment when all hell breaks loose. It is, however, extremely likely that a custodian is the one who will be there. "Our custodians that day brought kids to safety time and time again, jumping over pipe bombs," said DeAngelis.

Natalie Hammond explained to the attendees that the primary reason she thinks she is alive today is because she "played dead." As one of the lead teachers at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, she was the third person shot with an assault rifle in December 2012. After receiving four wounds and crawling on the floor to hide behind an office door, she was fortunate to survive.



“It was at 9:34 a.m. that day when a custodian, who was taking the place of our regular custodian, made the first 911 call,” Hammond said.

The role of a custodian in buildings places them as the one constant almost every day in every building. It is quite possible that first phone call by the custodian saved the lives of many that day. “If we stay closed in our building and only do what we need to do . . . that’s when problems are going to arise. We need to be aware and open the lines of communication,” said Hammond.

Knowing there isn’t one solution that is going to solve every situation or occurrence, where can you start in facilities?

“Empowering your employees to be the eyes and ears empowers them as stakeholders of safety. A lot of times we think of public safety. Train those people that own that space—they have the capacity to act and respond,” said DeAngelis.

“These events are low frequency, high impact,” said **Kristina Anderson**, who was shot three times at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia on April 16, 2007. “The emergency management response plan that was in effect that day was two years old and didn’t have an active-shooter strategy.”

Outsiders understanding your building before an event occurs is also another point stressed by Anderson and Hammond. “Law

enforcement has to know the ins and outs of your buildings,” Anderson said. “Partner with law enforcement.”

“In almost two-thirds of these school shootings, someone has information about these shootings before they occur. Train your facilities staff to be the eyes and the ears and report that information, not only early but often,” said Anderson.

MENTAL HEALTH

What Anderson was referring to is the growing mental health issue. According to the 2012 whitepaper, “A Strategic Primer on College Student Mental Health,” the Center for Collegiate Mental Health reports that about half of students who use counseling are new to mental and behavioral health services, but about a third of them have ongoing issues. Students who enter postsecondary institutions with diagnosed mental health disorders often have additional challenges with the transition to college or university life.

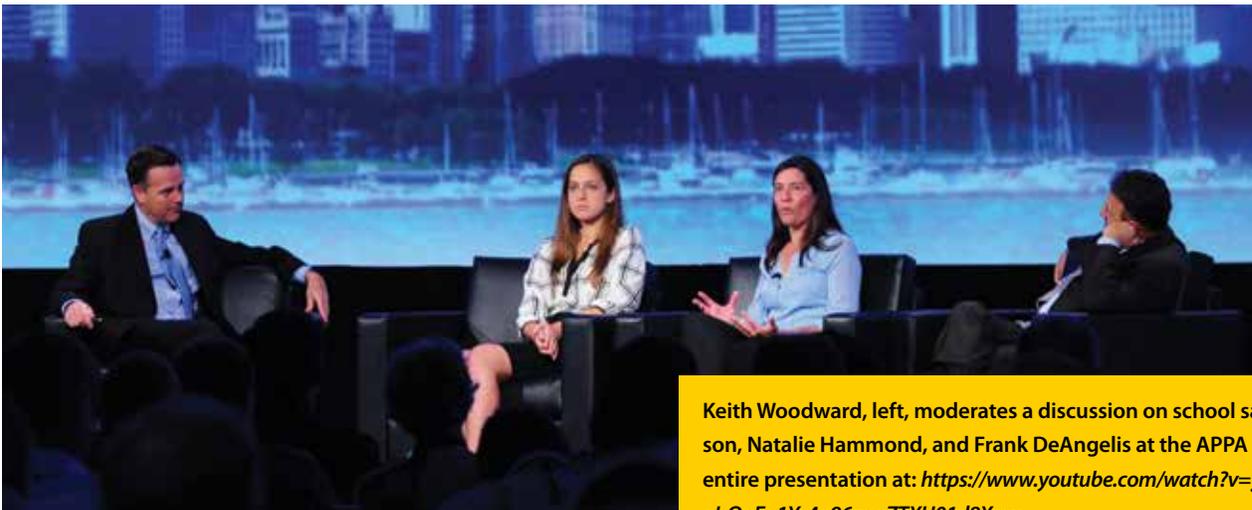
Mental health is clearly a growing concern. Peter Langman, Ph.D., is an expert on the psychology of school shooters. He describes his website (www.schoolshooters.info) as “a compendium of documents relating to a wide range of active-shooter incidents in educational settings. The purpose of this site is to help prevent

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Keith Woodward, left, moderates a discussion on school safety with Kristina Anderson, Natalie Hammond, and Frank DeAngelis at the APPA 2015 conference. View the entire presentation at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yI4UUeYtWxg&list=PLw8xBpl-OqEa1Yc4o96zoqZTXU01d8Xmu>

school shootings and to provide insight into the perpetrators of large-scale school violence.” His latest book, *School Shooters: Understanding High School, College, and Adult Perpetrators*, presents his research on active shooters. He recently discussed what he thinks facilities departments can do.

Langman said communication is obviously a key part of the conversation. “Training employees, and I think facilities employees, are top of the list because they are part of the student

environment; they are in spaces where students study, work out, and live,” said Langman.

Communication is tricky as well because of the privacy issues surrounding student information. “Facilities employees can look for leakage,” said Langman. Leakage is a term used to describe warning signs of potential violence.

“School shootings can be prevented by identifying warning signs in the form of leakage and attack-related behavior. Ram-

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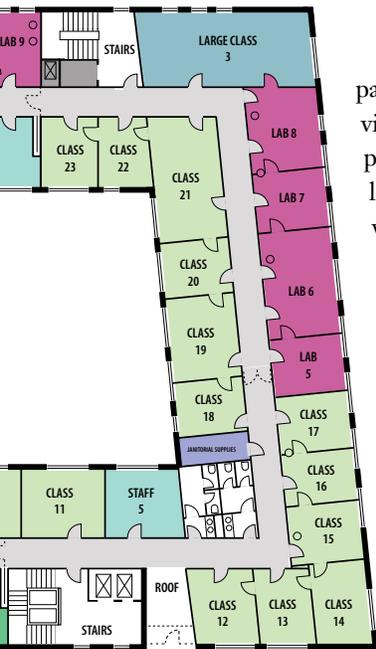
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page school shooters typically reveal their violent intentions through their talk with peers, their school assignments, their on-line behavior, and/or their interactions with their parents.”

OPENING LINES OF COMMUNICATION

A multiple jurisdictional National Summit on Multiple Casualty Shootings was held by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC); the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services; and the Johns Hopkins University School of Education, Division of Public Safety Leadership in late 2012. Its

findings are worth reading and can be accessed at https://www.fletc.gov/sites/default/files/imported_files/publications/summits-on-preventing-multiple-causality-violence/e021311546_MultiCasualtyViolence_v508_05APR13.pdf.

The report mentions communication as an important factor in dealing with school violence in the “Summary of Summit Recommendations.” Recommendation no. 4 asks institutions to “better educate health care practitioners; school administrators, faculty, and staff; and law enforcement professionals about the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and the Privacy Act to alleviate misperceptions or perceived barriers to sharing information across disciplines.”

There is little question that institutions are struggling with the line between sharing information and the privacy laws at that exist.

APPA is working with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) on developing codes dealing with the topic of emergency management. These codes are not imminent, but discussions are happening. In December 2014, NFPA held its School Safety, Codes, and Security Workshop, at which APPA was present. The report was issued in May 2015 and can be accessed at <http://www.nfpa.org/safety-information/for-consumers/occupancies/school-fires/codes-and-security-workshop>.

Some of the questions going into the two-day event included the following:

- What are the practical, code-complying solutions for protecting students/faculty during an active threat scenario involving guns, knives, bombs, and other weapons?
- What challenges face school administrators with regard to implementing building-based (brick-and-mortar) solutions and operational solutions?
- What security technologies/standards exist that need more recognition?

The NFPA report stated, “It will be incumbent on the various organizations that participated in the workshop, as well as other groups likely to be affected by the information in the report, to review and dissect the content. Changes to codes, standards, procedures, policies, and operational tactics are anticipated—likely in the near term. Coordination and cooperation among design professions—architecture, security, fire protection—coupled with input from the various authorities having jurisdiction responsible for ensuring that code provisions are properly applied will be especially important.”

TAKEAWAYS

Bad things happen to good people; simply turn on the news to verify that. Facilities departments are not responsible for the mental health of everyone. The code is not going to save facilities from everything. However, you might ask yourself if there are some policies you could initiate right now as best practices that will improve your facilities department’s preparedness. For example:

- If you needed to shut down every lock (assume card access locks) in less than 20 seconds, can you do it? Have you practiced it?
- Do you have a kit (with keys/access) ready to go for first responders that give them access to spaces?
- Do you have the mobility of floor plans and equipment so that responders can have access to spaces immediately? If not, does public safety/security?
- Are you checking in with the counseling department? Are there areas in the residence halls that keep creeping up on the radar and mandate your alerting staff?
- When human resources terminates an employee, does facilities know immediately so an employee doesn’t let the wrong person into a building or space?
- Do you have an access policy? Who is responsible for assigning access both initially and then with card access or a key?
- Do you have a meeting place for your staff during an incident?

CONCLUSION

At the end of the day it’s not about being prepared for every situation—chasing that goal is unrealistic and virtually unattainable. But what facilities professionals can do is be a consistent part of the conversation around issues that affect the wide-ranging complexities of the educational enterprise. In addition, we need to work toward the goal of being prepared when the moment comes, whatever that might entail. The lives of our students and colleagues may depend on it. §

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