

# Limit the Impact

**e**conomic downturn. Budget constraints. Cost of attendance. Campus infrastructure needs. Building to compete. For many colleges and universities, these phrases have become all too familiar over the last five years.

With today's economic challenges, educational institutions are finding themselves in constrained financial positions. They are struggling to continue academic or research programs and provide student support services while experiencing declining endowments, fluctuating enrollments, and federal and state funding shortages. Institutions manage these challenges in markedly different ways. Some are cautious and work to maintain their overall financial position. Others are concerned with preserving their debt capacity. Nearly all are wary of increasing the cost of student attendance.

With an increased need to compete for growing enrollments, institutions are consistently challenged to do more with less and struggle to balance today's financial shortfalls with the need to continue long-term planning, which includes enhancing campus infrastructure to support planned enrollment increases and "building to compete" in an effort to attract the best and brightest students.

Many institutions cannot afford to simply build new facilities to satisfy needs, let alone build space that they absolutely do not need, and this raises the question: When every square foot counts, how do you maximize your resources in order to limit the impact of future construction?

## EXISTING FACILITIES MASTER PLAN

Many colleges and universities implement a campus master plan to support strategic goals over a span of 10 to 20 years. Nearly all campus plans focus on future growth, including, but not limited to, new construction, future land use, and potential

## Build only what you need

**By Katie Karp**

land acquisition. Rightfully so.

Institutional master plans must also, however, take a more holistic and perhaps fundamental approach to master planning by critically assessing their existing campus facilities. A comprehensive, campus-wide analysis of current facility conditions, building use, and space programs can offer solutions to realize efficiencies in shared resources, as well as create opportunities to reconfigure space to accommodate future needs at a lower cost than new construction.

The major components of an existing facilities master plan should include the following:

### 1. Existing Conditions Analysis

An integral first step of any facilities master plan is conducting an existing conditions analysis of all campus facilities. This step is important for understanding the resources you currently have, how they are being utilized, and their overall condition. Once completed, this analysis should identify the potential uses of these facilities for the future.

Nearly all facilities managers have an ongoing tally of deferred maintenance for each campus building. Many are strategically planning for the pending "expiration date" of older facilities by developing replacement plans before the end of the building's useful life.

Conducting a facility conditions assessment for all campus buildings on a regular basis allows for the college or university





to strategically assess the extent of deferred maintenance and the associated costs. The institution can then conduct a cost/benefit analysis of remediating deferred maintenance versus extensive renovation or replacement.

Equally important is understanding how a facility is currently being utilized. Many facilities managers hold numerous records for any given building, including floor plans and the space program for the facility. However, as many institutional departments and/or divisions shift, reorganize, and expand to accommodate ever-changing needs, many managers alter their use of assigned space within a facility. It is important to update floor plans and space programs on a regular basis to ensure that the current use of a facility is reflected within these records.

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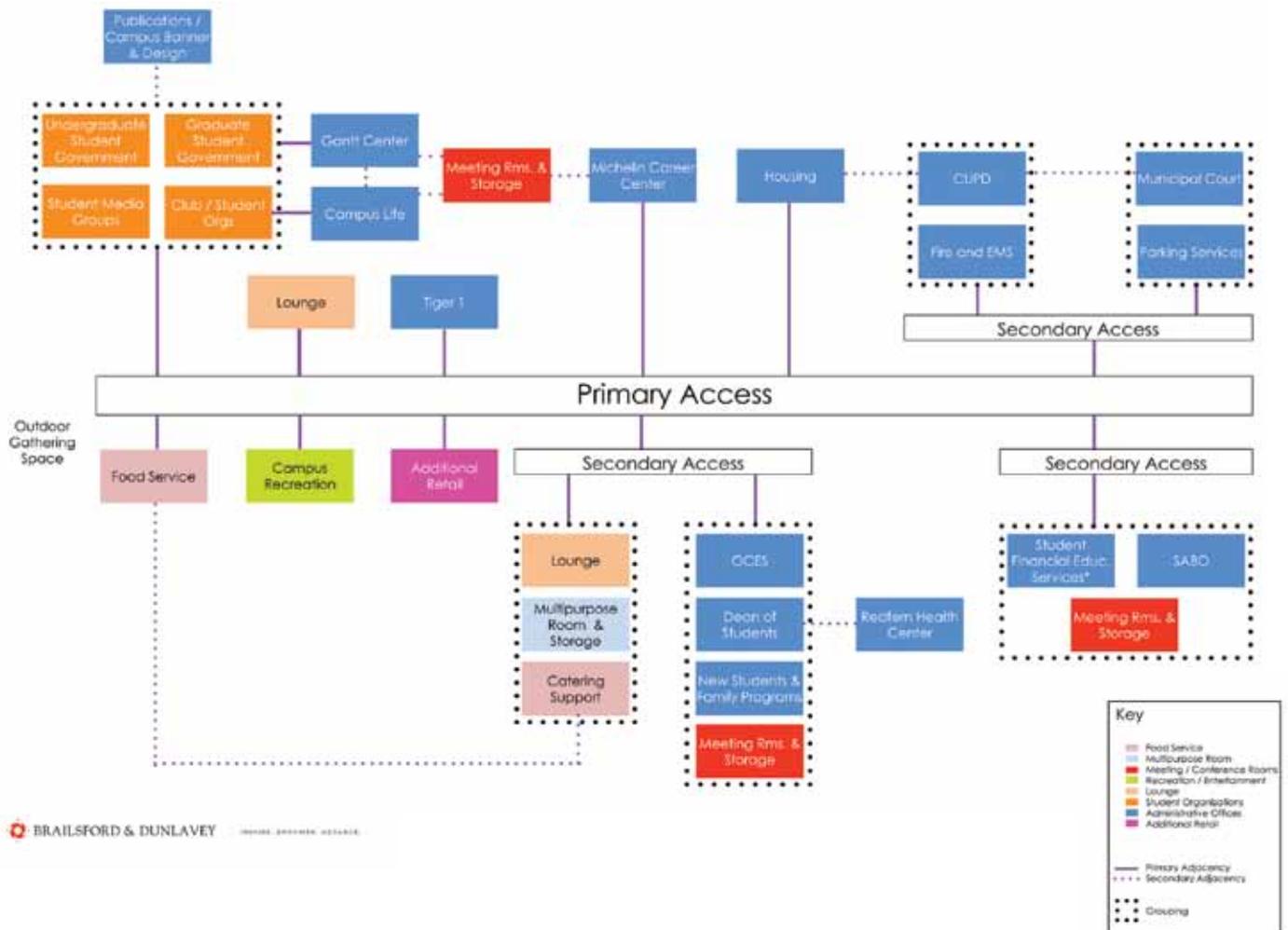


Figure 1. Example Adjacency Diagram

2. Existing Facilities Master Plan

With an extensive understanding of current facility conditions, the distribution of space programs by department and/or division can easily be quantified. However, understanding work flows, preferred adjacencies, potential efficiencies, current deficiencies, and future growth needs can only be learned by meeting with or surveying users of each area.

Gaining insight into departmental work flows will assist in identifying potential adjacencies that can ultimately create space efficiencies. Square footage that is recaptured through these efficiencies may assist in accommodating future growth for that area or can potentially satisfy the space needs of another area. For example, a financial aid department and student cashier/accounts department are typically a preferred adjacency within a college or university setting. The work flows of these two departments can intersect, depending on the structure of the departments.

By creating a physical adjacency between these areas, front-of-the-house efficiencies (i.e., shared lobby, shared student computer stations, etc.) can be realized and user convenience can be improved. The square footage recaptured through these efficiencies can accommodate back-of-the-house growth needs

for either area, or can be reassigned to another department that is in need of additional space.

Standardizing the size of all administrative spaces (individual offices, work stations, entry lobbies, conference rooms, copy/work rooms, break areas, storage, etc.) throughout the facility—and ultimately the campus—will recapture a significant amount of square footage that can be reallocated to meet future growth needs. For example, simply establishing and implementing space standards for individual offices and work stations by faculty or staff position across campus facilities will limit the number of unique office spaces and recapture square footage that can offset future growth needs.

Within one facility, there can be numerous conference rooms, copy/work rooms, break areas, storage rooms, etc. Because many of these resources are internal to a department or division's office space, they are often duplicated or underutilized, rather than shared among multiple areas. By moving these space types adjacent to the corridor, multiple departments may access and share them. For example, conference rooms needed by multiple administrative areas during regular work hours can be made available to student groups after hours. Creating multi-functional areas limits the need to replicate

these space types—even for different user groups—within new construction.

The bottom line: moderate renovation (i.e., moving walls) within existing facilities with limited deferred maintenance can realize efficiencies of space by creating adjacencies, standardizing administrative space, and creating shared resources. Moderate renovations of existing facilities will prove more cost effective than replicating this space within new construction.

### 3. Gap Analysis

As a part of the previous planning exercise, future space needs by department and/or division will be identified. Such needs may be accommodated through moderate renovation; however, some will likely need to be realized through strategic expansion or new construction.

By maximizing current resources through an existing facilities master plan, the institution will limit the impact of new construction and will not be building space it does not necessarily need.

Continuing with the theme of the existing facilities master plan, it will be important to ensure that the space program for new construction applies the same space planning principles. New fa-

cility programs should always look to create efficiencies through physical adjacencies, standardize administrative space, and strategically locate shared resources within commonly accessible areas.

### CONCLUSION

With the reality of today's financial constraints, it is important for colleges and universities to maximize the value of existing resources in order to minimize the impact of investing in new facilities. To maximize current assets, it is important to have a comprehensive understanding of existing facility conditions and current space use.

Taking a strategic approach to campus master planning and creating a master plan for existing facilities will allow an institution to make the most efficient use of its space needs through physical adjacencies, a standardized space plan, and shared resources. All such steps will limit space redundancies that may create an artificial demand for new construction. ☞

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Katie Karp is project manager at Brailsford & Dunlavey, a program management firm with in-house planning capabilities, based in Washington, DC. She can be reached at [kkarp@programmanagers.com](mailto:kkarp@programmanagers.com); this is her first article for *Facilities Manager*.

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