

## WHAT WORKS - A KECK REPORT

# PLANNING UNDER A DEADLINE

### BACKGROUND

A well-respected two-year college in a Midwest state system known for turning “slackers” into students with clear ambitions and goals seeks to renovate its science facilities to support changes in pedagogy and curriculum. The faculty in the natural sciences are enthusiastic, caring, dedicated professionals who want the best possible education for their students. They have spent considerable time developing and applying new pedagogical approaches and are highly invested in the opportunity to renovate the science facilities. Funds for renovation have been committed by the county and state, but the county has also imposed a tight timetable with construction scheduled to begin soon.

#### Issues:

- ◆ The floor plan suggested by their architects lacks sufficient space to satisfy the combined requests of the departments.
- ◆ The preliminary floor plan is controversial. Some faculty perceive others as intractable or as getting more than their share in a zero sum game.
- ◆ The timetable of planning focus is tight with many programmatic decisions still to be made.

#### Recommendations:

##### Find a way to meet all departmental needs within the available space.

- ◆ Reduce the amount of space allocated to labs to free up space for other programs.
- ◆ Start planning around reduced space for labs and revise upwards if necessary

##### Focus on programmatic needs and let those needs guide design.

- ◆ Build on strengths in interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and predisciplinary teaching.
- ◆ Determine which courses can be taught in the same space because they share materials, and equipment, and serve similar numbers of students.

##### Speed planning (or find a way to delay construction).

- ◆ Use a planning checklist to make sure that each room has the necessary space, dimensions, casework, and utilities.
- ◆ Make use of planning experts available through the state university system.
- ◆ Take advantage of expertise in the county government for planning and construction.
- ◆ Hire a “clerk of the works” as an advocate for the duration of the project. ■

### INSIGHTS FROM MEETING WITH STUDENTS

- ◆ Students think highly of the program and of the faculty, having chosen the college because of its proximity to their home.
- ◆ All spoke of their quick realization, upon arriving at campus, that faculty had high standards for student learning and they had to step up to the challenge.
- ◆ They like the idea of study rooms near the “action” on both floors—which means faculty offices, labs and/or classrooms. They would like a greater sense of visibility for what doing science means (the walls into labs should be largely glass).
- ◆ These “near-the-action” rooms should have access for computers, perhaps conferences spaces, with wireless access.
- ◆ Students had a good sense of the relationship between pre-lab presentations and their work in the lab, and wanted places to sit in labs for those pre-lab presentations, particularly in chemistry. They clearly understood the value of working in groups on exercises and experiments.

Student interest in the facilities planning was evident, and making this a home-away-from-home (a “hang-out” space) for their commuting students should be a high planning priority. (Where will they put their coats, bags, and backpacks?)