

READY FOR FACILITY CONSTRUCTION? DEVELOP AN INSTITUTIONAL VISION

Recommendations

Create a unified vision among the faculty

The science departments should delay the feasibility study to explore physical solutions to space needs until there is a unified vision among the faculty, first about curriculum and then about space. There must be a unified vision for the sciences as well as the new/renovated science facility. Feasibility usually means design, and moving to design would be a mistake before developing a vision. There needs to be further discussion among all the stakeholders about how the facilities will support the affected departments, their students and faculty.

Unite the department's mission with the institution's mission

Without clear articulation between the two missions, there is the possibility that the sciences are on a collision course with the mission of the institution. The institution's mission statement should guide curriculum development and reform. The planning committee should be given parameters centered on the institution's mission. The following questions should be addressed: Will there no longer be a need for classrooms which seat over forty students? Will the science facility be expected to serve other departments on campus? Will the science facility support student housing as possible study space? What is the committee's responsibility for the coherence of the diverse views and needs?

Visit peer institutions

To arrive at a unified vision, a planning committee should visit as many science facilities of peer/aspirant institutions as possible. These field-trips will enable the committee to determine which innovations they wish to incorporate and those that do not fit their institution's vision.

Select a project manager

A project manager is essential in any large construction project, but it is crucial when constructing a facility that will prove to be complex enough to serve all the sciences. A project manager should be granted release time to deal with project concerns, review construction plans and obtain consensus regarding facility needs.

Define "flexible" space prior to construction

Every department wants to incorporate flexible space into the design, but there is no agreed upon interpretation of what this means. Will the space be flexible in such a way to serve the larger college community? Will individual departments be able to shape spaces to meet particular course/laboratory needs as they arise? Will the same spaces be flexible enough to serve several departments? Will flexible space mean that casework and laboratory benches are modular?

BACKGROUND

This private, liberal arts college located in the northeast revised their science curriculum with success. Now, they wish to construct state-of-the-art facilities to complement their curricular revisions. They realized the construction process begins with coordinated planning efforts and faculty collaboration.



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Concentrate on building aesthetics during the planning process

The aesthetics of the building should become a major focus to serve as a positive statement regarding the work of those employed there. The entry point should serve as a window into the scientific study occurring inside. The building should entice non-science students and faculty to enter and explore. ■