

RESTARTING A BUILDING PLANNING PROCESS AFTER ADMINISTRATIVE TURNOVER

BACKGROUND

A small mid-states college is anxious to restart the building planning process after turnover in the upper echelons of the administration. The new president has named a facilities planning committee that is just beginning to determine how it will do its work. There seems to be significant change in administrative approach, and faculty and staff are still adapting to this shift. Past efforts have been less collaborative than ideal, but this project seems well on its way towards collaboration.

Main Issues:

- ◆ Making best use of people's time and energy
- ◆ Identifying a skillful project shepherd
- ◆ Engaging faculty in the planning process.

Recommendations:

Effective, productive communication saves time and energizes all involved.

- ◆ Create a communication structure that encourages trust and disclosure
- ◆ Enhance communication both "upward" and "downward"
- ◆ Draw out introverts so that all voices are heard, not just loud ones
- ◆ Capitalize on collegiality to move the project forward.

The ideal project shepherd practically walks on water. Look for someone who:

- ◆ Keeps the project moving, keeps the lines of communication open, and helps everyone keep their eye on the ball
- ◆ Leads effectively & communicates clearly
- ◆ Sees impediments
- ◆ Offers continuity
- ◆ Enjoys respect of both faculty and administration
- ◆ Shows dedication to the overall success of the project rather than to a personal agenda.

New buildings are often a once-in-a-career opportunity for faculty. To make the most of this opportunity faculty should:

- ◆ Know upfront how different curricular programs affect each other
- ◆ Remember that curriculum drives design (not the other way around). ■

FACILITIES & PLANNING

Comments on groups for the planning process were at the center of recommendations from the consultants:

Most successful projects share a fairly common committee structure, although members on those committees is extremely locally driven by local decision practices and authority structures. Similarly, which questions fall to which groups varies by their by their significance on a given campus.

There must ultimately be a group that makes final and strategic decisions of campus-wide significance. These include, but are not limited to, questions of project scope and funding, location. Other critical decisions that affect the entire campus are those about architectural style and context, programmatic space distribution, and campus standards for classrooms and labs.

A second group is usually comprised of representatives of building users who can give voice to ideas and concerns of a more tactical scale. Typically this includes faculty and staff (physical plant personnel) in departments to be affected, students (a very important group). This group informs the decision-making group, but their powers are very organically-derived... meeting in open forums.

All groups must understand its role and responsibility, and trust in the good-faith efforts of all.