

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Office of the Chancellor
Swanlund Administration Building
601 East John Street
Champaign, IL 61820



May 24, 2011

Dear Colleagues,

We want to thank the *Stewarding Excellence @ Illinois* Space Utilization Project Team for tackling the review of campus space needs and for its diligent work and thoughtful recommendations. The Project Team's report affirmed many of the perceived challenges regarding the use of space on campus and proposed vital areas for further inquiry. Perhaps the most important endorsement by the Project Team is that our current mix of centralized and decentralized control of space management is appropriate. We will evaluate the Project Team's recommendations in the order in which they were made.

Move space management to the Office of the Provost.

As noted in the report, there is currently a shared responsibility for space management and allocation between Facilities and Services (F&S) and the Office of the Provost. This review has demonstrated the excellent working relationship between the staff of the two offices and the progress that is being achieved through this partnership. There is an understanding between the two offices as to which office has responsibility for what type of space. It is important to recognize that space is the campus's largest capital asset. The Office of the Provost supports the academic mission through establishing policy, resource allocation and, in conjunction with colleges, space use. F&S provides planning and technical support for assessment, programming, and improvement of space. Because there is no confusion between the Provost's Office and F&S regarding space issues, we see no reason to merge these operations into the Office of the Provost when the arrangement we have on campus appears to be working so well.

Although not directly applicable to this recommendation, we want to note the progress which was noted in the Project Team's report relative to the assignment of general classrooms. The Project Team recognized the need to reconsider the management of general assignment classrooms and allocation of space between colleges and units. The Office of the Registrar and the Office of the Provost have gathered data and established benchmarks for use of instructional space. Through collaboration with deans and department heads, this effort has resulted in better standardization of scheduling of classes, increased understanding of the needs of departments, and supported the temporary closure of Lincoln Hall. The information gathered by this process has led to a significant increase in the use of the largest and most desirable classroom space, more efficient use of space, and an improved ability to make scheduling adjustments centrally. Student access to classroom space for their programming needs has also improved.

Maintain an accurate record of space usage.

We agree with the Project Team's observation that more information about space usage should be collected and made available. The response submitted by F&S supported this recommendation as well. Although not mentioned explicitly in the report, a database of campus space has been in place since the mid-1980s. In 1997, our campus migrated from a database to a more robust Computer-Aided Facility Management (CAFM) system. This system links the space database to AutoCAD floor plans using ARCHIBUS software. The advantage of a CAFM system is that room areas and buildings' gross square footages are consistent in both the database and the floor plan drawings. The system also allows maps of floor plans to be generated that can be highlighted by department or room use. Our campus is ahead of many of our peers who have not yet migrated from non-graphical, tabular data to a more comprehensive CAFM system.

Updates to ARCHIBUS are made daily as remodeling, new construction, space reassignments, and other activities affect the space inventory. Communication and strong working relationships between the Provost's Office, F&S Planning Division, and college facility managers have been integral for keeping the inventory up-to-date. In addition, biennial space surveys and audits are performed to ensure that space information accurately reflects field conditions. Annual snapshots of ARCHIBUS space information are currently available through the Division of Management Information's webpage. Our campus space management practices are good but improving access and gathering more information about how we use space continue to be a priority for our campus.

Create a plan for reducing, and eventually eliminating, the leasing of space off campus.

The Project Team also encouraged administration to review all off-campus leasing activity which mirrored the recommendation of the Administrative Review and Restructuring Working Group. This effort has been underway for the last year, coordinated by the University Office of Real Estate Planning and Services. To date, the Urbana campus has realized \$117,295 in annually recurring savings from the cancellation or renegotiation of leases. Under a reorganization plan, Illinois Extension will realize nearly \$700,000 in annual recurring savings from lease terminations. We do not, however, support the total elimination of off-campus leasing activity. Because there are situations where off-campus leases are the best options due to programmatic or space needs, the elimination of all off-campus leasing is not possible or prudent. We support a more thoughtful approach to leasing activity, including requiring a full examination of the feasibility for on-campus space before allowing off-campus leases. This review will continue, and we are confident that future savings will be identified.

Require that each college and campus research unit develop a master plan for new buildings and renovation projects.

The Project Team highlighted the need for more master planning of space. Meeting this need has been a goal of the planning staff at F&S, and they have received excellent cooperation from the deans and staff of the various units. Four academic units— College of Education, College of Applied Health Sciences, University Library and School of Social Work— have completed

master plans. These plans will need to be updated. Additionally, the Colleges of Fine and Applied Arts, Media, Law, and Liberal Arts and Sciences and University Housing are currently developing master plans. The goal is to review the space needs of all units every other year and we support that goal.

Make a campus commitment to upgrade all classrooms to a minimum level of instructional technology within the next five years.

The campus must have classrooms equipped to meet the current instructional demands and available technology. We are pleased that this is an area of significant progress through the collective efforts of the Office of the Provost, CITES and F&S to revive the “Classroom Improvement Initiative.” This initiative was a plan that began in 1994 to architecturally remodel all classrooms to a contemporary consistency and provide electronic instructional media systems in General Assignment Classrooms. After the largest seating capacity and most heavily scheduled auditoriums and theaters were successfully upgraded, funding for the program became sporadic. However, recent progress has been made through the use of a mix of available funds such as the Library/IT Fee, and the Academic Facilities Maintenance Fund Assessment (AFMFA). Thirty-seven classrooms were funded through these combined sources; 17 of those classrooms will begin to receive improvements and updates this summer. These classrooms are located in some of our most heavily used buildings such as David Kinley Hall, Armory, English Building, and Gregory Hall. Upgrade projects are focused on classrooms where the need for improvement is acute, those holding 30-50 students. At the completion of this effort, 259 classrooms of the 431 General Assignment Classrooms (or 60%) will be modernized, with a plan to improve 32 more classrooms as soon as additional funds become available.

Appoint a standing committee to oversee classroom space, including maintenance, design, scheduling, and technology standards.

The Project Team called for ongoing oversight by a campus-wide committee, especially as it relates to the use of instructional space. A standing oversight committee has been a recurrent recommendation as part of previous reviews of the use of instructional space. We agree that an oversight committee should be created without further delay. The Instructional Space Advisory Committee will be charged by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Provost and will include faculty, facilities staff, administrators, and students. The charge for the oversight committee has been drafted and will include at least the following tasks:

- adopt guiding principles for use of instructional space and determine standards for equipment within the instructional spaces;
- determine the appropriate inventory mix of instructional space, e.g., small, medium, large, and what qualifies as “instructional” space;
- advise on the current teaching and learning practices and scheduling of instructional space and the ramifications for our space needs;
- inventory and assess the use and condition of all instructional space; and
- create and track space utilization metrics on an annual basis.

We believe that another committee should be created to advise on the use of space outside of the instructional area. There is a pressing need to provide a means for feedback on the use of non-instructional space and how we can optimize the use of all space on campus. We will ask the F&S planning staff to develop the responsibilities for such a committee and a draft charge letter. After both committees outlined above are operational, we will address the need to develop a policy on the use of all types of space on campus with the advice from these committees.

Establish a committee at the Provost level to evaluate the needs of faculty and students for research space on campus and develop ways to utilize it more efficiently.

We intend to cover research space in the reviews outlined in the section above. We would include the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research on the issues relative to the use and allocation of research space on campus.

Weigh the costs and benefits of decommissioning and/or demolishing some buildings on campus to reduce maintenance burden and energy footprint.

The demolition of buildings does occur on campus and is accomplished through the campus space reduction planning process. Buildings which are appropriate for demolition are identified and timeframes for action have been established. The demolition timeline for buildings ranges from those slated to come down in the current year to others which will be demolished over the next 15 years. Some demolitions are planned for not long after buildings are vacated while other demolitions may take more time depending on evolving space needs. We are satisfied that the planning for decommissioning and demolition occurs and is done in a reasonable and methodical way.

Classroom buildings should be constructed in key locations, research space should be centrally-located, and administrative buildings should exist on the edge of campus.

Prior to building more classroom space, research space or new administrative space, it is prudent that we utilize fully and improve the use of existing space. It was pointed out in a comment to the Project Team report that the call to build more general classroom and research space is inconsistent with the goals set forth in the campus's Climate Action Plan (iCAP). We take our obligations under the iCAP very seriously, and we agree that constructing new buildings without maximizing fully the use of existing buildings is contrary to both the spirit of and promises made in iCAP. The Project Team rightly endorsed an earlier recommendation that we gather more information about how we use space on campus. It is critical that we build a reliable database of the use of space before we continue to build. We are aware that opportunities to build new space are hard to reject, however, long-term strategic planning for space use must be considered when evaluating new construction projects. We must maximize the use of existing space on campus, which requires appropriately investing in maintenance.

Although the Project Team did not specifically recommend a project to identify the areas where record storage occurs, it was listed as an additional consideration. We believe that storage of

records and the development of a plan to reduce the space devoted to records retention is a project that should be addressed within the next calendar year. The Office of the Provost and F&S, working with the University Archivist, will be given the specific task of studying and making recommendations related to the use of space for records storage. We will ask for a project plan, including funding requirements and timelines for addressing this important initiative.

Conclusion

We appreciate the Project Team's thoughtful analysis. Determining the appropriate use of space will always be an issue for the campus. Implementing the actions outlined above will better position future leaders as they make thoughtful decisions based on space utilization data. The space and equipment needs for instruction and research should always be a campus priority. We are reassured that even in these difficult economic times, we are making progress on addressing the challenges of scheduling and making necessary improvements to the physical and technological environment on this campus.

Sincerely,



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Richard P. Wheeler
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