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Master of Your Domain

A comprehensive, written master plan should encompass new construction, deferred maintenance and existing facilities assessment

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EQUATING MASTER PLANNING with only new building projects is a restricted approach at a time when growth has slowed for many institutions of higher learning. Today's schools need master plans that focus on more than expansion, and that are written and comprehensive.

Comprehensive master planning that enables administrators to generate multiple options aids in problem-solving. Consider, for example, the need to generate additional office space. Without a master plan, the tendency might be to construct a new building just for this purpose—a costly approach and one that is not always necessary. With a master plan, other less costly avenues may be carefully considered, planned and budgeted for, such as converting an existing facility instead of building a new one.

A master plan allows administrators to provide better quality space for students and to assure that deferred maintenance is completed in a timely way. This type of planning includes a facilities assessment that takes into account how existing buildings can be used to accommodate present and future use. This, in turn, helps to develop solutions that have a reasonable and cost-effective basis for deterioration, obsolescence, inadequacy and usability of facilities—all of which are critical to a school's

continued vitality, even accreditation.

Comprehensive master planning also helps administrators to adapt existing facilities to a variety of changing and non-traditional requirements of today's students. The contemporary college population is more varied and places more demands on physical facilities than ever before.

For example, a greater percentage of 18-year-olds is attending college, and

and proper presentation equipment for the older population. Older students also have a greater need for privacy. This translates into a need for private, single rooms instead of rooms accommodating two to four people, non-communal bath and shower facilities, and residence hall rooms that are more thoroughly soundproofed than in the past.

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there are more students over 21. Both age groups bring more personal belongings with them than students once took to college—everything from computers and VCRs to answering machines and refrigerators. All of which places greater demands on residence hall space and on electrical systems.

A sound master plan can reflect how a college or university provides classrooms for older community members that include Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-approved access routes

purpose rooms. They also have a greater sensitivity to personal hygiene and shower more often, necessitating plentiful water supplies in residence halls.

Greater numbers of disabled students are also going to college, and institutions of higher learning are required to schedule changes in facilities to assure compliance with the ADA. These students frequently want private residence hall rooms, rather than communal rooms. A comprehensive master plan targets where compliance is

needed and assists in developing solutions, scheduling renovations and estimating and budgeting cost outlays.

Among students across all these categories is a growing desire to attend lectures in smaller, rather than larger, classrooms. And because of violence on campus, many students are looking for greater security arrangements in the schools they attend, such as secure locks on doors and windows, all of which can be provided for in a master plan.

Some schools have converted residence halls into office spaces and, because of an influx of students, must now convert these offices back again. Thus, existing buildings must be evaluated for the cost and appropriateness of converting them to other uses. A logical system-by-system/space-by-space analysis can be developed to give colleges plans for conversions.

Handling deferred maintenance

Unlike deferred compensation, there is no positive pay out with deferred maintenance left undone. Deferred maintenance that goes uncompleted is really managing by exception, and this often results in handling maintenance when crises occur. Uncompleted maintenance accumulates over the years and forces corrective action, when institutions of higher learning are least prepared to handle it in measured and economical ways.

Master planning fosters realistic budget planning and allocations. When it comes to expending revenues, sound budgeting helps colleges and universities to have more realistic visions of

what they can accomplish over time by helping them forecast the expenditures they need to accommodate present and future needs.

Supporting the effort

Fundraising becomes more effective because it is supported by a well-defined rationale. A written master plan helps fundraisers to present a more

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cogent case for an institution's fundraising efforts. They are more knowledgeable about how and when money will be spent, if armed with a master plan that helps them sell more effectively.

Alumni can readily identify with the need to fix a leaking roof. And campaigns can be designed to appeal to pragmatic alumni who will appreciate sensible, cost-preventive work. A good master plan also assures that campus buildings are maintained in the future in a timely and cost-effective way by outlining and budgeting the upkeep.

A master plan can demonstrate that an institution is making good use of its resources and not wasting them, and can document to a community precisely how a college adapts its facilities to service community activities. For exam-

ple, a school may refurbish its gym so that it is dimensionally capable of accommodating college-level sports, as well as elementary-school-level and community activities.

Recruiting and retention

Comprehensive master planning can increase recruitment and retention. Because colleges and universities are tuition driven, recruiting and retaining students continues to be a critical issue. The problem and challenge is that today's students choose institutions of higher learning the way they choose health clubs. If facilities do not suit their needs and tastes, they go elsewhere. When students choose a college or university, looks are important.

A master plan assures that a school's visible image and presentation of itself through its facilities are as cosmetically appealing as possible—windows and doors to entranceways are well done, that there are no tiles missing or falling from ceilings or walls, and that there are no spalled bricks in plain view.

Overall, a comprehensive, written master plan prompts a college or university to use space more strategically, efficiently and economically in accordance with an overall strategy to maximize the physical make-up of the campus, according to educational goals. ○

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