

THE SCIENCE FACILITY IN CONTEXT

The Campus Planner's Perspective

A campus plan is a comprehensive point of view about an institution's future intentions for maintaining and developing its physical resources. It must be strongly rooted in mission, academic plan, and financial resources. In order to be effective, it must be developed through a participatory and collegial process. The plan must also be founded on approved projections for number of faculty, students, and staff, and based on both an understanding of present curriculum and programs, as well as future initiatives.

Campus plans are often used to inform a development effort, and documents prepared during the planning process can be used for fund-raising. Some foundations and funding agencies are beginning to insist that projects fit within the context of a campus plan.

During the campus planning process a decision will be made about how much additional space is appropriate, and whether constructing an addition to an existing science building or constructing a new facility is the desired alternative. At this time, an appropriate site will have been chosen for any new space. Other institution-wide issues will have also been resolved, such as the number and size of classrooms to be provided. (Remember,

classrooms are an institutional resource, and their provision and use should not be determined by individual departments.)

Questions about the future number of science faculty and students can be answered only in the broader context of the college or university's long-range plans. The institution should have a point of view about projected enrollments and numbers of majors within an agreed upon time frame: 15-20 years, for instance.

Relationships between science disciplines have changed dramatically in recent years, as have the interrelationships between the sciences and other institutional programs. Disciplinary boundaries have become less distinct between the sciences. Affinities between the sciences, the social sciences, and the arts and humanities are evolving, and institutions are trying to strengthen and encourage these ties. Programs such as environmental studies, molecular biology, computational biology, and neuroscience, which bridge academic divisions, should be coordinated through campus-wide planning.

Colleges and universities should be sensitive to the timing of campus improvements. How much lead time will be required for new or renovated space to become available to different user groups on campus? The process of completing new or renovated facilities could take seven to ten years. For a department scheduled for facility improvements at

the end of the cycle, that period will seem like a long time to wait, and some departments may not be scheduled for improvements at all. There is the potential for faculty and students to perceive a three-class society: those with improved facilities, those to be improved, and those with unimproved spaces. This could affect morale, and have a detrimental impact on the quality of instruction, as well as on the number of student majors. One strategy that the college or university can use to minimize this problem is to launch a series of campus-wide classroom renovations. Renovations can include new carpet, paint, furniture, network wiring, and multimedia equipment. This is an easy way to enhance the teaching and learning environment for the greatest number of faculty and students on campus.

The campus plan is as much a process as it is a product; it must support the established academic plan, as well as be flexible enough to provide for the changes in program, curriculum, enrollments, and priorities that will occur over the planning time frame. Only by understanding the broader perspective, can an institution ensure that the specific needs of the sciences are appropriate and fit within the institutional mission and vision—it is then the facility improvements and programmatic initiatives are a true bridge between the past and the future.