



The Three R's of Facilities: Repair, Renovation & Replacement

By Darrell Shumway

SINCE THE FIRST JUNIOR COLLEGE WAS founded in Joliet, Ill., in 1901, community college facilities have evolved from “storefront colleges” to today’s state-of-the-art campuses. Construction of those campuses, however, has been spread out widely over this 109-year history. Some 28 percent of community college campuses were constructed before 1950. Nearly half were built by the 1960s, and 90 percent constructed by 1980 (see chart). That means that nine out of 10 community college campuses are at least 30 years old, while more than three quarters are at least four decades old. Small wonder, then, that the facilities on many community college campuses are in need of three Rs: repair, renovation, and replacement.

At the request of ACCT and AACC, Parsons conducted a survey of facilities needs at community colleges. At the 660 community colleges that responded to the survey, total needs exceeded \$49 billion. If those figures are extrapolated across the nearly 1,200 U.S. community colleges, the total facility needs nationwide are close to \$100 billion.

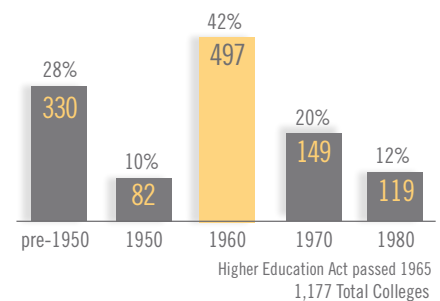
When facing the decision of whether to repair or replace existing facilities, community colleges need good, quantifiable data to take to their governing boards and communities. One way to obtain such data is by having an unbiased third party perform a Facility Condition Assessment (FCA). Combined with an energy audit, an FCA will enable administrators to better manage their operational budgets by planning for expenditures years in advance. Energy audits can also demonstrate ways to reduce energy costs and carbon footprints, while an FCA and the data it provides can help districts planning bond measures to fulfill the goals laid out in their master plans.

A typical process for planning a campus expansion should begin with an FCA, followed by an educational master plan to determine future workforce needs and space requirements. At this point, a facilities master plan should be developed. Depending on the size and complexity of the plan, a program manager or construction manager should be brought on board. The project manager or construction manager’s role would include helping select the architects and engineering firms needed to start the design process and overseeing the delivery of those projects.

An essential part of the planning process involves informing constituents in the community of proposed campus improvements. The public needs to buy into such plans, and it has been said that when the public is given good data, they make good decisions. Governing boards have a huge responsibility in this area. Along with their role in providing their communities and students a well-managed institution and state-of-the-art learning environments, they also need to be responsible for operating their campuses with as much energy efficiency as possible and providing an environment conducive to recruiting students and retaining those that are already there.

We are often told, “It’s not about the buildings you build, but what those buildings do.” Instead of referring to a campus full of buildings, I believe we need to refer to a campus full of learning environments. Much research has been conducted on how to create optimal learning environments, and the use of day lighting, fresh air, and sound enhancements are all important considerations when planning facilities for our students. High-quality learning environments can reduce absenteeism, increase student performance

WHEN MOST COMMUNITY COLLEGES WERE BUILT



and staff productivity, and help strengthen recruitment and retention.

Communities take pride in their community college campuses, and what they see is the facilities that make up those campuses. Those facilities are considered community assets and are used for a variety of functions beyond classroom activities. For this reason, it’s all the more critical that community college facilities are well planned. Assess what you have through the FCA process, consider energy-efficient, LEED-certified sustainable construction, plan for environments that enable learning, get the local community involved, and remember the most important thing — it’s all about the students.



Darrell Shumway is the community college practice leader for Parsons, a full service program/construction management company and a member

of the ACCT Corporate Council. Shumway served as a trustee at Pratt Community College in Kansas for 23 years and the Kansas Association of Community Colleges for 20 years. He also served on the ACCT board for six years, including as chair from 2000-01, as well as on AACC’s board of directors from 2001-04.