Lessons Learned: Spending $500 Million to Rebuild a 60 Year Old Campus
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Lessons learned from the campus perspective

What lessons have I learned after spending almost $500 million building buildings?
...what was good, what else should/could be done. What preparations does one need to do to begin a building project?

BUDGET/CEO RESPONSIBILITIES

- No matter how well you budget, assume it will not be enough
- It often takes three, four or five years from time of budgeting until going out for bid. Build in a safety net with the budgeting process. The economy in this country can turn on a dime; you want to be careful not to lose too many projects. Don’t assume the past 5 yrs escalation will be the next 5 yrs escalation
- Develop a plan to handle issues when you find something is not in the building someone had wanted? Don’t let extra dollars fritter away; plan carefully and watch for the ‘after the fact’ requests. At the same time, set up a contingency budget for each building of at least 10%.
- If going green, learn the LEED points system so as to understand what goes into it...do you really need showers even if they are connected with bicycle racks as alternative means of transportation no matter how many points it brings? Designing using LEED is the right thing to do for the environment but be sure to understand the process and the points. Work with the architect designing the building so that you know what designs are being put in and that you concur with that decision.
- Faculty want buildings...you need to remember everything that goes along with making those buildings function...ie: the infrastructure
- Remember, no one cares about the entire campus like you do. Stay on top of the entire project.
- Know that you will never satisfy everyone. Don’t even try.
- Plan, plan, plan

GOVERNANCE

- It is important to get faculty/staff/student input into the priorities for the campus. In this way when budgets necessitate reductions, the decision belongs to everyone. Revisit the plan regularly and remind folks of decisions made to reduce certain areas.
- Use building user groups, BUGS, to work with the architects on the design of the Building. Faculty/staff need to have input on the design otherwise the end product may not meet the needs of the classroom faculty and you’ll never hear the end of
it...well, you probably won’t even when they do participate but at least you are on
the high ground
• Make all members of the BUG sign off on the final plans, get actual signatures on a
set of the plans. Months, or years later, when the building is built and staff want
very costly changes you can determine if they had agreed to these plans. You may
not actually use that but it’s good to know. And it convinces your Board that you
have had input
• Be sure architects know that while faculty/staff may ask for things to be included
there needs to be a small group of folks that do the final recommendations, based on
costs. Be sure to communicate back to the users final decisions. This last part of the
loop is too easily left out.
• Faculty are often dreamers, that is what makes them creative in the classroom but
expensive in the design
• Know that some key faculty will want old technology...not all bad
• The design should be able to accommodate replacement with newer technology as
staff and circumstances change over time.
• Pick your battles

PLANNING

• No matter what calendar you plan, assume everything will take longer. Life has a
way of interfering and causing delays. Be prepared; plan multiple scenarios, at least
in your head if not on paper. If you think you’ll be in a building in September plan for
the fact that it might be January....
• Don’t publish your new classrooms in the schedule until you have moved
• Program the entire campus at one time with one architect rather than
“piecemaking” it. In this manner you can be assured that a program or service area
doesn’t get ‘missed’. The last thing you want is to be 5 years into a major project
only to realize you didn’t plan space for a department that is in a building about to
be torn down
• Use a college master architect and master landscaper. Plan out your master plan in
its entirety before going out to bid for construction and then be flexible years later
when things change; be prepared to review and revise the master plan regularly.
• Be careful to link varying projects or you will have one sewer pipe end 15 feet from
the one it is supposed to connect to in the next building pipe ...or sidewalk or
connectivity. Once projects are underway there will be different contractors and
different architects on a project; be sure there is someone making certain where one
project ends another begins.
• Don’t forget the projects that are invisible to the eye ...sewers, connectivity, and
other utilities. Be the protector of the infrastructure. Faculty and staff will be more
interested in the new buildings; someone has to watchdog the pipes.
• If a project is a priority, build it in that order no matter where it is located on
campus or you may well not have sufficient dollars by the time you can build it It is
tempting to build a project that is off to the side of campus first as it does not disturb the campus as much. If it is low on the priority list think twice about that decision.

- Be sure to include dollars for infrastructure, landscaping, signage and way finding. Signage, landscaping and way finding are usually done at the end of a large project; if these are important to the job be sure money is set aside and not touched.
- Think parking, parking, parking. As they often say, it's all about the parking. Just live through 7 years of construction and you will KNOW that is a true statement. It IS all about parking. Remember that projects all need lay down space - which will often be in the parking losts, plus other parking will be lost during the construction process. Additionally if you have numerous projects going on at any given time you could have as many as 250 construction workers on campus needing parking in addition to your staff and students.
- Hire architects that are prepared to work with faculty who may not be current in what the classroom of the future needs. You need the architects to be continually urging the current approach to classroom design. The rooms need flexibility and state of the art technology. Have them take staff on tours to see similar facilities at other campuses early on in the design process.
- When building offices...decide on sizes for each job classification. Consistency will lead to less infighting. The last thing you need is to discover one building designed the faculty offices to be 120 sq ft and the other building to have offices of 90 sq ft. Following state guidelines for spaces such as this would limit complaints. At least that way you can blame inadequate spaces on a "higher power".
- Build flexible space. None of us knows what the teaching needs will be in 15 years; these buildings are going up to serve students for at least 30 years. You are building for teaching styles not yet figured out; building for jobs not yet thought of.
- Categorize the types of classrooms needed for varying technology and be consistent. Determine what technology you want in each type of classroom and build consistently. This way faculty/staff using one classroom will know how to use the equipment in the next room.
- Color is nice but if you order desks for all buildings of the same color it makes life for the facilities staff a whole lot easier. Faculty are known to forever be moving desks from one classroom to another dependent on how many students are in any given class. One color in a building makes the classroom look better and one color on campus makes it even easier for staff.
- Plan out electronics carefully, add extra outlets for greater flexibility. Architects don't always know how you want your office or classrooms designed. Be certain to look at the blueprints to assure the outlets or data ports are where they belong. Don't forget the outdoors for outlets, scoreboards need power; quads will need power for events. If you can't read the prints, ask questions.
- Provide reading blue prints 101 for user groups. This is so they can do the above.
- Provide construction terminology 101, LEED 101
- Agree on door design...glass in door vs. on sides. Otherwise one design will be picked and someone will not like it (well, they may not like it anyhow but at least you all will have chosen the final door)
• Store office supplies and furniture in a secure site. If office supplies have to be stored for a considerable amount of time when moving in/out of buildings know that squirrels and mice can do a job on paper products. Best NOT to have to store materials.
• Be sure accurate assessment is done of program needs 5-10 years out so that appropriate space needs are set
• ADA…check federal vs. state standards…federal often stricter. At least in California, architects are planning to state standards. Remember that if you are sued for ADA violations it will be in Federal court and it is the Federal standards they will be enforcing so best to build to Federal standards.
• Design build vs design-bid-build - learn state regulations…design-build worked much better for us
• Remember to thank folks for taking the time/show appreciation
• Plan a celebration when demolishing a building of substance. Give momentos when a building of meaning is torn down or something special when opening up new building

CONSTRUCTION

• Assume that anything you’ve asked to be put in might well be value engineered out along the way if the district has such a process. If it is important, keep checking it is in the design. Remember that as educators we aren’t familiar with either the language or the specs and items get missed or lost so learn to examine the drawings when they are brought to you for sign off
• Also be sure that the users are reminded that there may have been things they personally wanted in a project which could not be included due to budget constraints. The users should not be allowed to try to add them into the project midstream by claiming “they were always part of the scope”. Keeping careful notes of scope would be helpful.
• Be prepared for continual electrical and plumbing crises when pipes are hit or lines cut. Inevitably there are pipes or lines where no one knew they were; or a contractor errs and digs in the wrong place; you will occasionally have to send staff home and cancel classes. In a project this big it is likely to happen several times; hopefully you’ve been able to plan the switchovers etc.
• Realize your current facilities staff will be tasked to fix many issues even though a contractor is doing the project. Plan for the overtime; no one knows your campus like your staff so when a pipe is hit your staff will need to assist in the repairs to be sure all is completed properly.
• Use a project /program manager…your own staff would not have time or expertise to stay on top of the project, whether doing one building or 20. Most colleges/universities do not have the staffing to supervise a large building project. Someone needs to have the college foremost in their mind and not solely the project alone.
• Think about line of sight when looking at blue prints for offices, bathrooms, classrooms. Be sure when you look in the door of your office that you are happy with what will be seen from the outside.
• Be sure there are sufficient monies to tear down old buildings after new construction is finished. Projects have their way of increasing in cost. Be sure budget is included for the demo of old buildings...and including extra dollars for mitigating hazardous materials and that which was not expected.
• Be prepared for abatement issues to come up out of the blue. A hole will be dug for a new sewer system and lo/behind buried there is an old oil drum with a pool of oil unknown to anyone...
• Keep the campus informed as to status of projects.
  - Put photos on website
  - Send out email updates
  - Hold open forums with photos
  - Send out community newsletters
  - Go on the speaking circuit to community groups...they love it!
• Construction is noisy, dirty and annoying as hell.

Live with it.
• Be prepared for the best laid out schedule to not work out. Assume there will be delay after delay.
• Try to plan around your busier times but accept it often isn’t possible. Le: parking structure hauling away dirt...in first month of class...street traffic a nightmare.
• Be prepared for an occasional incompetent contractor and be prepared to bite the bullet and terminate contracts, sooner rather than later. Incompetence can delay your project and leave you with significant damage.
• Always use every safeguard for the protection of staff. You never know when a contractor has made an error that could injure staff if assumptions are made; use all safety precautions at all times.
• Meet often with project/program manager; stay on top of projects. Even though you’ve hired competent people to manage your projects, as the owner you need to stay involved and follow progress often.
• Know that the contractors won’t be thinking of your students’ safety. Watch all building sites carefully...be sure fences don’t go all the way to the street; allow for walking on something other than the road.
• Think safety with each project...obviously from a worker standpoint but think in terms of the campus. Are the barriers/fences to the project creating a hazard; are the fences and sand bags placed so as not to hurt a student or staff member. If it is a large project, consider hiring a campus safety person.
• Prepare signage for students frequently when doing infrastructure. Do you need to do anything special for DSPS students? Stay on top of that issue.
• Procurement...go for large quantities; tie on to state bids BUT...get what you need, only going down this road once. Ex. Theater seating; PE lockers; bleachers.
MOVING DAY

- Whatever plans you make for moving in; assume they will be delayed. Life happens, plans change. Deal with it.
- Be certain to plan carefully for moving in to the new building. We moved admissions and financial aid over one weekend. Friday we served students in the old building and Monday we served students in the new building. Our staff planned and planned...well ahead of time.
- Do not publish your schedule of classes with the new building numbers assuming you will be in on time. Better to meet students at the old classroom and have the faculty escort the class to the new building when it opens.
- Moving day...send everyone home and let the movers do their job
- Be prepared for many door key issues; furniture issues...work your way through them, blaming someone gets nowhere. Realize that the behind the scenes staff are buried now...locksmith, IT, maintenance and security.
- Have a party, celebrate, thank staff for their hard work
- Be prepared for a long ‘punch’ list...

Enjoy the experience; know that you are preparing a college for many future generations.