

Report of the USFC on the Language and Literature and Interdisciplinary B Buildings Incidents

To: Mark Lussier, Professor
President, University Senate

From: Francisco Lara, Associate Professor
Chair, University Services and Facilities Committee

Date: December 3, 2012

Re: Findings and recommendations

Background

In October 2012, the University Senate President, Mark Lussier, asked the USF Committee to review two separate incidents affecting the Language and Literature and Interdisciplinary B Buildings in the Tempe Campus. The first involved the flooding of the Language and Literature building and the subsequent displacement of faculty and staff along with the interruption of classes in several floors starting on September 29th. The second incident occurred on October 1st and involved the presence of the Tempe Fire Department after smoke was detected in the elevator shaft at the west entrance of the building. In both cases the cause of the incidents, the amount of disruption and damage, and the protocols followed by the university were unknown. The committee asked faculty and classified staff about the two incidents and met with Dr. Morgan Olsen, Executive V.P. and Chief Financial Officer, to obtain firsthand information and discuss the response of the university in these situations. This report summarized the findings and recommendations resulting from these activities.

Findings

General Facts:

- As of today, the university manages about 20 million square feet of space in all its campuses. This square footage keeps growing, which results in a mix of old and new facilities that demand a complex maintenance program.
- The university keeps track of maintenance needs through surveys, the calculation of a Facilities Conditions Index (FCI), benchmarking with comparable universities, and a capital infrastructure assessment commissioned to an external vendor (Sightlines). The next capital development assessment will take place in 2013.
- The university estimates that the maintenance budget should be equivalent to 1% of the current replacement value of all facilities annually. In recent years the university has been able to allocate about 12-13 million to maintenance, which is about half of the required budget.

- The State has provided no funds for facilities and services maintenance at ASU for the past 5 years, forcing the university to cover these costs by (1) putting these costs in its operating budget and; (2) borrowing money.
- The ASU's office of Facilities Development and Management is working under strong constraints trying to respond as rapidly as possible to emergencies and giving the highest priority to safety of faculty, staff and students.

Flooding of the Language and Literature Building

- At 9:40 on Saturday, September 29th, the ASU Police Department was alerted of the flooding of the Language and Literature Building. The ASUPD activated a protocol, which in this case included contacting Facilities and Development Management (FDM), the Tempe Fire Department (TFD), and Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S). It was determined that the cause of the flooding was a custodial chemical mixer on the 6th floor that was left under pressure over night and failed. It was also established that the area impacted by the flooding required asbestos control actions.
- FDM and EH&S hired an external vendor for restoration and asbestos abatement actions. Tests were run to determine if asbestos has contaminated the building. Air samples taken in the building indicated that the building was free of airborne asbestos and restoration work was initiated immediately.
- The magnitude of the damage required the closing of classroom 150 for the balance of the semester. Faculty and staff in 26 offices were displaced during the cleanup, with 3 offices requiring longer relocation due to the magnitude of the affectation. We were informed that relocation of faculty and staff was coordinated with the unit heads in collaboration with their colleges.
- The North, South and East wings of the LL building were reopened September 30, 2012. Classroom 150 and the following areas in the East wing remained closed for restoration:
 - 3rd Floor – Rooms 349, 350 & 352
 - 4th Floor – Rooms 448A, 449A-D, 450U1, 452
 - 5th Floor – Rooms 546A-B, 547D, 548, 550, 552
 - 6th Floor – Rooms 647A-D, 649A-D, 650U1, 652
- At the moment of the meeting with Dr. Olsen, we were told that the estimated completion date of the restoration work was November 16, 2012. The university is seeking to recover all damage and repair cost through the insurance program covering all Arizona public universities.

Emergency in the Interdisciplinary B Building

- At about 4:00 PM on Monday, October 1, 2012, smoke was reported in the Interdisciplinary B Building, forcing the evacuation and momentary closing of the building.

- The TFD determined that the cause of the smoke was the motor of the elevator serving the west wing of the building. The motor was isolated and the building was reopened by ASUPD at 4:23.
- According to Facilities the motor received regular inspection and maintenance and no previous issues were found. The motor has been repaired and the elevator was placed back in service after additional maintenance on November 2, 2012.

Recommendations

The USF committee inquiry indicates that maintaining facilities and services in ASU's large and ever growing campuses is a complex task that requires carefully planning and monitoring. It also demands the utilization of large amount of resources, which in recent years the university has struggled to obtain through normal financial channels. The committee has concluded that the university has in place the programs, protocols needed to respond effectively to incidents like those affecting the Language and Literature and Interdisciplinary B buildings this year. However, it also revealed that meeting budget requirements for the maintenance and development of facilities in all four campuses has been challenging for the university. As demonstrated by the two incidents investigated by this committee, the potential of disruption and damage to persons and property is high and its occurrence should be minimized to the extent possible.

With the later objective in mind, the committee reached three conclusions:

1. ASU faculty and staff need to be well informed about how to alert facilities management of any issues affecting offices, classroom and other facilities, so FDM can respond promptly and effectively to any maintenance issue. The ASU's FDM office has created an online service and hotline that allows anyone in the university to report maintenance and repair issues, including emergencies, in all campuses. These services provide faculty with the opportunity to play a more active role in avoiding hazard, minimizing disruption and reducing waste of university resources.
2. The university needs to be more proactive in informing faculty of capital improvement needs, maintenance assessments and benchmarking, surveys and other instruments to plan and monitor the quality of facilities and services. The upcoming infrastructure assessment by Sightlines offers an opportunity in that direction by including faculty in the preparation of the assessment.
3. Faculty should contribute directly to the development of university policies and programs regarding maintenance of facilities and services. The committee recommends the creation of an online survey to measure the needs and perception of faculty regarding teaching, research and other work facilities in all four campuses.