

Facilities Oversight Committee
Notes on the meeting of 17 Feb 2006

1. Meeting was in the Presidents Conference. Those present were Murray Leaf (Chair), Peggy Zotter (for Larry Terry), Kathryn Evans, Kevin Patel, John Ferraris, Sandy Goertzen (for Staff Council), and Donna Rogers (Student Services).

The meeting was somewhat hampered by Dr. Leaf's inability to get the projection system to cooperate.

3. Provost Wildenthal spoke at the beginning to provide an overview of related activities and establish communication between them. There are two main projects. The most important is the campus enhancement project funded by an allocation from the U T System for the purpose of making infrastructural improvements related to safety and the campus beautification project funded by an individual donor. There is also a project to expand parking, which is taking the advice of the Parking and Security Committee.

Dr. Wildenthal's remarks immediately addressed the problem of the viability of the 2002-3 Master Plan that had been of concern to the Facilities Committee. The answer was that the Master Plan was still largely viable, but was in the nature of a sketch—a relatively small design project at a relatively small price. What was now wanted was something much larger and more complete, a detailed design project by a major international architect.

Specific features that would carry over were analysis of the infrastructural needs including the heating and energy plan extensions. The idea of the central pedestrian mall would be kept and the broader idea of compact central campus in which transport would be over pedestrian and bike paths, with a surrounding circular drive, peripheral parking, and green belt or park like area between the surrounding major streets and this campus core. One feature that would definitely be changed is the alignment of the circular drive. It would be expanded, so that it ran through the east parking lots, south of several athletic fields that are to the south of the School of Management, and then go due west to join Waterview. Waterview would form its eastern link, up to a road to be built about where the southern border of the golf driving range is. The new loop road from here will go east to cross the creek and enter the northernmost parking lot east of Green Academic Center. We would then have short roadways coming into the campus core from it, rather than coming from Waterview to it.

With respect to parking, the Master Plan idea of building a parking structure for SOM southeast of McDermott Library is now dead. In the President's view, the expense was not justified in view of the large amount of empty land. A new parking lot will be put south of the lot that serves the Activities Center. Care would be taken to provide esthetic screening from the entry drive from Campbell road.

Dr. Wildenthal distributed "Information about UTD and its campus enhancement project, which contains more details. He will be the contact point for the several activities.

With these changes in mind, the Master Plan could still serve as a useful basis for discussion among the campus community.

2. Website:

Having reviewed the website mockup, it was agreed that we would go ahead and recommend that such a site be put up. The following general points were agreed to:

It would keep the present title: Problems and Suggestions. There was considerable discussion of possible misunderstandings, especially concerning the ambiguity of "Suggestions." It was agreed that we would try this for now and modify it if needed. The link would be on the UTD home page, and would either include a very short parenthetical explanation or, if possible, it would be set so that when a cursor passed over it there would be a pop-explanation saying what specific kind of problems and solutions, from the statement at the head of the website.

The office of the VPBA would be responsible for overseeing the site.

The general layout of the site would be that each heading would be simple and common-sense, using the current terminology for whatever it was. This would be immediately followed by a brief explanation, as at present.

Instead of telephone numbers, or in addition to telephone numbers (depending on the person), we would have a click-here button to send an email form. The form would ask for the location and description of the problem and for contact information for the sender, for follow-up. A copy would go to the liaison and a second copy to the committee (VPBA).

In the Building Liaisons section, there should be a more consistent system for designating the entity that the liaison represents. At present it is a mixture of building names and administrative divisions, e.g.: "Admin Bldg" but "Graduate Studies." Since the facilities are physical, the designations should logically be physical buildings or spaces, perhaps with administrative units in parentheses where this would be clear to the users.

It would also be very good if the site could have a campus map with imbedded links, so that a person who did not necessarily know the name of the building they were in but knew where they were on the map could click on that spot and the proper name and link would pop up, which they could then click on again to bring up the form to send the notification.

Additional contact points that should be listed were: Student Government, Physical Plant for outdoor facilities, the Activities Center, and perhaps Food Service. The latter is not strictly facilities, or purely facilities, but may very well overlap. So including it in the site is more consistent with the idea of a one stop complaint service for facilities than leaving it out would be.

3. Master Plan.

In view of the remarks of Dr. Wildenthal, it was considered already agree that we would recommend retaining the Master Plan site and try to expand it to make it a more useful focus of campus discussion. It was agreed that in its present form, as a PDF file that one simply has to page through, it was not easy to interpret, and several options were discussed to make it more transparent including at the most elaborate extreme making a 3-D flyover site, with elevations, like that of the Google Earth, associated with some sort of discussion forum or even a wiki plan that would allow people to input and edit changes.

Another option was the have the various maps available all on the same scale, so they could be printed and compared side by side or as overlays, or even pulled up an laid over one another on-screen, and again some way of providing discussion or input.

To narrow the options and be sure what we were thinking of was feasible, it was agreed that we need to find out if the original architects' visualizations were still available, either on campus or through the architectural firm itself. Since the obvious place they would be if they were on campus was the office of the VPBA, Peggy Zotter agreed to try to find out.

4. The meeting was adjourned at 12 noon, agreeing that the next meeting would be March 17, same time.

Murray J Leaf
Monday, March 13, 2006