

Santa Monica College
Custodial Services Assessment
Executive Summary

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Overview

The Custodial program at Santa Monica College (SMC) is one that has grown in size and complexity along with the physical growth of the District since 1929 to its current configuration of one central academic campus along with six satellite campuses. As with most institutions that experience growth over a number of decades, the custodial program has essentially remained unchanged in its approach to service delivery and organizational structure and has simply expanded or contracted in response to the expansion of staff/students, size of area serviced, the addition of new geographical sites and times of financial growth or retrenchment. With annual custodial expenditures currently near \$4.5 million and a staff level of 53 FTE, an examination of this critical support services organization is long overdue and carries with it the expectation that opportunities for improvement in campus communications, cleaning effectiveness, chemicals and equipment, custodial procedures, training, and worker safety might be identified.

The scope of the assessment provided for the consultant to examine the custodial services program at SMC, assess the levels of service delivery, review the current management and organizational model, identify any significant issues and make recommendations for improvement where needed. The full report includes all of the relevant details to support the macro level observations and recommendations noted below.

Organizational Structure

There are three levels of management for the custodial services at SMC:

- First line custodial supervisors - 3 FTE
- Associate Director of Facilities Management - 1 FTE
- Director of Facilities Management - 1 FTE

The line supervisors direct the work in the field, the Associate Director functions as the program manager and the Director is the policy level manager.

There are three shifts of operation in custodial services:

- Day Shift - 4 am to 3:30 pm
- Mid Shift (NS1) - 1 pm to 9:30 pm
- Night Shift (NS2) - 5 pm to 1:30 am

There are also one custodian on a Day Shift and one on a Mid Shift on Saturdays and one Day Shift custodian on Sundays.

Observations:

- At least three of the six incumbents, including the Director, Associate Director and one supervisor, possess insufficient subject matter expertise on custodial services. One of the custodial supervisors could not be interviewed due to absence so the skill levels of that individual are unknown.
- Skills lacking include management level communication, customer service, organizational, planning, technical, team building and workload distribution.
- The management team has lost credibility with the campus faculty, student body and the custodial employees.

- The custodial unit is fractured with no communication or teamwork between shifts and supervisors.
- Recent management decisions on shift hours, work assignments and changes in chemical and equipment have complicated service delivery and produced negative results.
- Inappropriate custodial work procedures, processes and work assignments are being allowed to continue unabated.

Service Levels

As part of the assessment process, the consultant met with more than twenty SMC faculty and administrative leaders as well as bargaining unit and student representatives. Approximately half of the custodial staff were also interviewed although employee absences, time limitations and the individual choice to not be interviewed prevented 100% participation. The results of these meetings and surveys are summarized below:

Faculty Leadership:

- Almost universal dissatisfaction with unacceptable custodial services in classrooms and academic office areas.
- Lack of confidence in Facilities Management leadership
- Lack of communication, responsiveness and follow up by Facilities
- No understanding of what service levels to expect daily or weekly
- Custodians viewed as being burdened with excessive workload
- Elimination of Grave Custodial Shift (10 pm to 1:30 am) universally viewed as a mistake that has resulted in dirty classrooms and restrooms in the mornings.

Administrative Leadership:

- Dissatisfaction with poor cleaning levels in buildings and offices
- Believe that custodians are disenfranchised from the campus
- Communications from Facilities are poor
- No follow up on work or service requests

Students:

- Campus buildings are not clean, especially classrooms and restrooms
- Conditions are not consistent with the high reputation of the campus
- Student Center, Computer Lab and ESL Center noted as examples of poor cleaning

Custodians:

- Most custodians interviewed said they felt badly that they were not able to provide better services because of the workload assigned them
- Most saw the high absenteeism rate as a primary cause of the high individual workload
- Almost universal lack of confidence in Facilities department leadership
- Most thought change of the Grave Shift hours was a big mistake
- A number of custodians expressed shame at having to face students who were trying to use restrooms early in the morning that were dirty and had no supplies because they had not been cleaned the night before

Clearly the client sampling shows that cleaning service levels are not meeting the expectations of customers and employees at SMC. Physical inspections of various campus buildings confirmed the client samplings with few exceptions. It is

evident that most District buildings have not been receiving adequate custodial services for months, if not years, and some areas of campus buildings have received no cleaning at all for extended periods of time. Overall custodial service levels are rated as very low.

Underlying Reasons for Low Service Levels:

- Poor technical and cleaning processes have been allowed for decades
- Lack of training for staff including Lead Custodians and Supervisors
- Lack of good organization by Facilities Management
- Lack of well defined roles and responsibilities
- Lack of established work standards and procedures
- Lack of a viable quality control program
- Poor supply, tool and equipment process
- Negative impact of very high worker absenteeism
- Poor work and resource distribution throughout the custodial unit
- Senior management is too distant from the work and makes unilateral decisions with minimal information
- Lack of clear vision, goals and objectives for the custodial program and its employees

Cost of Service Delivery

In order to fully assess the cost of service delivery, the cost of custodial supplies/equipment and paper/restroom supplies must be added to the General Fund line item for custodial salaries in order to gain a full perspective on custodial costs. For the purpose of this review, however, the consultant focused only on the salary costs since these reflect the investment in the human resource which is approximately 90% of the allocated costs.

Custodial \$ per Square Foot of Campus Space

The District currently funds custodial salaries at a ratio of \$4.89 per Cleanable Square Foot of building space. This compares very favorably with other Community Colleges in California whose similar investments range from an average low of \$3.00 per CSF to a high of just over \$5.00 per CSF.

Total Cleanable Square Footage per Custodians

A second way to examine resource investment is to divide the total Cleanable Square Footage of the District by the number of funded cleaning custodial positions (this excludes non working supervisors). SMC has 50 funded Custodian and Lead Custodian positions which translates to a ratio of 18,402 CSF per employee. Compared to other Community College Districts, which ranged from a low of 16,000 CSF to a high of 31,000 CSF, this current cleanable space to custodian ratio represents a strong investment by the District into funding adequate staffing for custodial services.

Ratio of Custodians to Campus Student Population

Another way to examine custodial investment is to explore the ratio of custodians on a campus to the student enrollment. This metric compares numbers of custodians to the volume of students that occupy and utilize the campus facilities. For this exercise, the student population is divided by the number of custodial

cleaning staff to arrive at the listed number of students per custodian. For this exercise, the consultant examined several Community College campus with student populations that ranged from 28,000 to 30,000 students and found them to have a ratio of custodial employees to students that ranged from 1:800 to 1:1000. SMC has an approximate ratio of 1:566 meaning that each custodial employee supports a much lower student population than in other Districts and also reflects that the current funded staffing level is adequate to the task at hand.

Summary:

SMC has made a significant financial resource investment into custodial services. The funding and resource investment model is more than adequate to support a custodial program that should be able to provide satisfactory services. Shortcomings in custodial services are not related to the District's resource allocation model.

Staffing Levels and Custodial Assignments

In examining the current organizational model by which the custodians are distributed throughout the three work shifts and are assigned individual work assignments, the consultant discovered that there is no standard by which resources are allocated within the custodial unit. In addition, there is an absence of viable metrics by which management can measure the distribution of work to ensure that it is not only effective, but equitable as well. As a result, each shift is left to deal with the work that senior management delegates and the work is handled differently on each shift based upon supervisor skill levels.

Observations:

- The Night Shift has almost no documented individual custodial work assignments and changes the ones that are in place frequently so staff often do not know where they will be working until they report at the start of the shift

- Team cleaning is used to cover large amounts of building space but it is done without a clear division of workload so tasks often go undone because employees have no direction on how the work is to be accomplished
- Senior management has recently transferred a large number of staff from the main production Night Shift to the Mid and Day Shifts, further reducing the ability of the Night Shift to accomplish basic levels of service
- Division of total District Cleanable Square Footage by the available roster of 50 Custodians and Lead Custodians calculates to 18,402 CSF per employee, which indicates that there are adequate numbers of staff but the lack of organization, poor custodial practices and high absenteeism are impacting service delivery.

Supplies and Equipment

Supplies and equipment have a direct impact on the productivity, quality and safety of custodial work performed. The assessment revealed that there is significant room for improvement in the manner in which these critical items are purchased, distributed and maintained.

- Examples of the issues noted are:
 - Insufficient allocation of general cleaning tools such as wet mops and dust mops
 - Insufficient and lack of appropriate vacuum cleaners
 - Paper and restroom supplies running out of stock frequently
 - Equipment not maintained properly
 - Lack of training related to supplies and equipment

- Lack of access to OSHA mandated chemical Safety Data Sheets

Custodial Procedures

The custodial procedures in place at SMC are not consistent with industry practices and represent only general approaches to the work. Use of methods and tools consistent with the industry are behind the times and more modern and efficient tools and process are available. Of special concern is the lack of well defined step-by-step procedures for servicing each kind of space type along with the specialized procedures need to adequately maintain restrooms, locker rooms and showers.

Observations:

- Cleaning procedures have been inherited from past generations of supervisors and staff with minimal improvements or evolution
- Supervisors have been unwilling or incapable of keeping up with more appropriate and modern cleaning techniques to maintain productivity and quality
- A historical lack of leadership with strong custodial technical skills and an understanding of the cleaning industry
- Many undesirable and inappropriate practices have been in place for years including using a broom and dust pan for sweeping surface debris from carpets instead of vacuuming.
- Training in modern custodial techniques is noticeably absent

Safety and Security

In examining the role of custodial staff in campus and site security, no major issues were discovered. Locking and unlocking of buildings was well understood by the staff interviewed, and these procedures were well developed and appear to be followed by staff. None of the academic or administrative staff expressed any concerns about security as it related to the custodians.

Numerous worker safety concerns were noted:

- Chemical Safety Data Sheets were not readily available to staff
- OSHA mandated Safety Data Sheet training has not been kept current
- Custodial locker storage often conflicts with electrical panels
- A lack of personal protective equipment including gloves, eye protection and dust masks
- Unsafe ladders observed in custodial inventory

In addition to worker safety issues, the consultant noted the following risks to the District emerging from the current custodial work practices:

- Lack of OSHA compliance as noted for chemical safety and ladder safety
- Lack of personal protective equipment poses loss risks for work injuries
- Emergency eye wash station in chemical storage area not functioning
- Cosmetology Department cited by State Board of Cosmetology for sanitation and cleaning being substandard directly related to custodial services.

Best Practices

In examining the custodial program, the consultant looked for examples of industry Best Practices being modeled. Such practices can be characterized as industry best practices, while others represent a “best in class” for the District. In either case, the emphasis was on trying to identify admirable and state of the art practices within the custodial unit that went "above and beyond" normal custodial procedures in productivity, quality or safety.

At this point the only best practice noted was from the Day Shift Custodian Supervisor who has implemented a daily log sheet for his route staff who make note of their arrival/departure time, the tasks performed at the site and any challenges encountered in completing the work. This enables the supervisor to be current on the work being performed and to intervene on behalf of the custodians if management support is required due to any of the work challenges noted. This practice would benefit all shifts that have remote route services.

Recommendations

In considering all of the information processed during the course of this assessment, the following list of recommendations is provided for consideration by the District. The recommendations are categorized as Critical and Desirable, with the Critical recommendations being essential to drive the needed changes in custodial efficiency, effectiveness, productivity, safety and customer services as noted in the previous sections. If the Critical recommendations are not addressed, any attempts to reverse the current trend of declining quality, unsatisfactory service levels, low employee morale and a dissatisfied customer based will most likely not succeed. Some of these recommendations lend themselves to simple and direct changes in process or procedures, while others will require a more strategic approach followed by a tactical implementation plan. Those recommendations categorized as Desirable are also important in terms of improving service delivery and enhancing the working conditions for staff but

they may be assigned a secondary priority based upon District analysis and available resources. By no means is the list of recommendations all inclusive since a more detailed and extensive review process is needed to identify more options to improve service delivery, quality and safety. The emphasis on the recommendations included is to identify those issues needing to be addressed in order to launch and sustain a course correction for this vital District support service program.

Critical:

- The leadership team needs to be adjusted in order to ensure that all three levels of management have the requisite skills in the areas of communications, organization, planning, custodial technology, performance management, quality control, training, and team building. Options to consider are:
 - Accelerated training for incumbents based upon assessed ability to respond proactively to such training
 - One or more interim appointments to lead the process of making needed changes
 - Targeted recruitments to attract and retain leadership that possesses the requisite skills needed to manage the turnaround of the custodial program and sustain improvements
- A Strategic Plan is needed to codify all District priorities emerging from this report into a cohesive set of prioritized and scheduled steps to correct the deficiencies, develop a higher level of custodial service and identify all necessary resources.
 - Led by qualified Facilities Leadership
 - Advised and coordinated by key District officials

- Supported by small cross shift team of custodial staff to ensure employee ownership
- A comprehensive training program for Custodians, Lead Custodians and Supervisors to raise skill levels, provide clear goals and objectives, and provide better understanding of roles and responsibilities
- Move the Night Shift back to the traditional Grave Shift hours of 10 pm to 1:30 am in order to provide adequate time to service buildings after late evening classes and venues are completed
- A complete realignment of all custodial work station assignments on all shifts in order to distribute the workload in an effective, efficient and equitable manner. Current work assignments are not efficient nor fair.
- Rebalance the employee distribution between the three shifts. Recent management moves of large numbers of custodians from Night to Mid and Day Shift have unbalanced the unit leaving too few custodians on Night Shift
- Provide additional leadership positions on the Night Shift to better support and supervise the work and accommodate new building space to be added in the near future.
- Correct all OSHA and other safety issues noted in the report
- Review and modernize the custodial equipment and tool inventory and ensure staff have the appropriate tools needed for the work
- Set clear performance expectations for all levels of custodial staff
- Establish and maintain a structured Quality Control plan to maintain higher levels of custodial services
- Implement a more comprehensive and useful computerized maintenance management system to collect and track data on complaints, work orders

and labor usage. Ensure that customer interface and communication features are included

- Establish processes to deal with, or compensate for, the high rates of custodial absenteeism. Explore performance management, incentive programs for attendance and a range of supplemental labor options
- Until the current program is stable and services are improved, add a number of limited term custodians to the Night Shift to support the coming crush of the Fall student enrollment. This would be limited to a 4 to 6 month time period.
- Pursue employee allegations of supervisor favoritism and nepotism with the custodial unit and take action as appropriate.

Desirable:

- Consider changing the cleaning schedule for private offices from 5 days per week to 2 days per week to free up custodial labor and improve the actual quality of the service.
- Establish Service Level Agreements with buildings and departments that have unique needs and tailor custodial services, within available resources, based upon departmental priorities
- Conduct a Lessons Learned review of recent new building construction projects to identify any design issues that have increased custodial workload or made the cleaning of these new buildings more difficult. Use findings to refine new construction design review process
- Improve the Facilities website to include information on custodial service levels, frequencies and other information so that the District community can have better information
- Implement a number of recommended specialized custodial procedures and processes as noted in the main report

- Deploy expanded custodial employee recognition programs in order to better integrate the staff into the District community and offset feelings of disenfranchisement
- Conduct a follow up review in one year to assess programs

Conclusion

The time and effort dedicated to this assessment, along with the investment made to fund the study, are clear indicators of the commitment of the Santa Monica Community College District to its constituency of faculty, students, staff, and the community. The District is to be commended for taking this bold step to determine how best to meet its responsibilities to provide a clean and safe academic and community service environment. As someone who has seen many institutions of higher education over the past 40 years, the consultant is pleased to be of assistance to the District while at the same time somewhat disappointed that the findings of the assessment could not be more positive than they emerged.

In considering the negative findings, it is also important to note that many of the District custodians are committed employees who both want and attempt to provide the best services possible, and the majority of faculty, students, and staff expressed strong appreciation for the custodians and the challenges that they face. As with most large programs of this type, service delivery problems often develop over the course of years and do not rise to the top until issues have compounded to the point where corrective actions become necessary. The good news is that all of the issues noted are correctable and the consultant has every confidence that the District is not only up to the challenge but embraces the opportunity to take the necessary steps to improve the physical environment of an institution that has proven itself to be a leader in many venues. There is every reason to believe that the custodians and the District community will both respond positively to each step of the course corrections that are implemented.

The consultant was struck by how dedicated to their campus many of the custodians were. The personal interviews were very revealing in that staff were proud to have a job at SMC and spoke well of campus leadership and faculty as well as acknowledging the prestigious reputation of the institution. Conversely, it was also a pleasant surprise to hear faculty and staff praise custodians and express great respect for the challenges the employees face in trying to do a good job under difficult circumstances. Even when faculty or staff were critical of custodial service delivery, they were quick to point out that they did not blame the custodian personally and believed there were circumstances beyond the control of the custodians as to why specific cleaning tasks were not being performed. To that end, SMC is a unique environment in this consultant's experience, and one in which everyone should take great pride.

It is hoped this report will enable the Santa Monica Community College District to move forward in improving the delivery of custodial services where needed, and, as a result, provide the high quality of services that the District faculty, students and staff so richly deserve.