

# **Santa Monica College Custodial Services Assessment**

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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. As the size of the combined physical plant has continued to grow, along with commensurate student enrollment, the legacy structure of the District's custodial programs has remained basically unchanged in terms of service delivery models, technology, and innovation. 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.

## Organizational Structure

SMC operates its custodial program in a centralized structure, similar to many higher education institutions, with custodial services designated as part of the Operations section of the Facilities Department along with Grounds and Recycling functions. This structure has centralized senior management with three line level Custodian Supervisors who report to the Facilities Department Assistant Director of Operations. All campus communications, operations, personnel, and service delivery decisions are made at the Assistant Director and Director level with the line supervisors making daily decisions on how to address daily workload and work requests based on available resources. The custodial workforce is currently divided into three shifts with one Day, one Mid (NS1) and one Night (NS2) Shift that provide service coverage from 4 am until 1:30 am Monday thru Friday along

with one day and one swing custodian on duty for Saturday and one for Sunday services as needed. Each weekday shift has its own Custodian Supervisor that reports directly to the Facilities Assistant Director of Operations who, in turn, functions as the senior manager over custodial services. Decisions on staffing, training, workload assignments, chemicals, equipment, supplies, and other operational logistics are all made at the department level with minimal coordination or involvement of the Custodian Supervisors. There is also minimal integration of the three work shifts with each shift having distinct work responsibilities and with minimal communication between supervisors. The current organizational structure provides the following potential benefits to the District:

- Custodial issues are centralized and focus on senior management objectives and their understanding of campus needs and priorities.
- The direct management link from the Facilities Director and Assistant Director to the custodial program optimizes local control, decision making, and investment strategies.
- Personnel decisions can be made consistent with other Facilities service units.
- Campus custodians have an opportunity to be part of a larger work group with the potential of better inclusion into the activities and culture of the Facilities Department.
- Custodial chemicals, equipment and procedures can be more easily standardized to optimize procurement and avoid excess redundancy.

Conversely, the current structure demonstrates some inherent shortcomings:

- The current structure requires that, in order for success, the Assistant Director of Operations have subject matter expertise in Custodial procedures in order to exercise resource allocation, service delivery,

training and workload management for the primary service unit within Operations. Absent that expertise, there is disparity between the experience and skills of the line supervisors and the manager who is making all of the decisions. The current Assistant Director does not possess the commensurate level of subject matter expertise.

- The fact that the current Director of Facilities has significantly more custodial expertise than the Assistant Director has led to the Director being the de facto technical manager over the custodial program leaving the Assistant Director to be viewed by the staff as the disciplinarian or enforcer. It also creates the feeling among some staff of being "tag teamed" by management in light of the fact that previous Directors have seldom involved themselves in routine custodial issues in the past.
- The legacy structure has led to the evolution of three distinctly separate custodial work groups with no communication, integration or shared resources. The physical and time separation of management from the afternoon and night shift has created a situation of friction between the three shifts with little or no sense of teamwork or identification of common goals.
- There is no common technology to track custodial complaints, service levels, or workload. As a result, Supervisors do not have the metrics or tools necessary for operational assessments. Some Campus constituents also use phone calls and emails in place of work orders to communicate complaints and work requests. Without data, the measurement of levels of success is impossible.
- Undesirable practices in terms of chemical usage, cleaning procedures, and individual custodial performance management have been allowed to thrive due to the lack of visible senior management in the field.
- Technical advancement in custodial procedures has been minimized by the lack of supervisor interaction and the unilateral decision making by the centralized leadership.

- The Director and Assistant Director are only marginally aware of the challenges, issues and service delivery difficulties that the supervisors are struggling with on a daily basis. Most issues are dealt with on a "put out the fire" reactive basis with proactive and preventative leadership being noticeably absent.

The current centralized structure of the custodial programs at SMC has not, in and of itself, led to service delivery shortcomings, but rather it has enabled poor work practices to continue and has impeded the inflow of new and improved cleaning procedures, techniques and technologies. The lack of ongoing exposure to new ideas and the underutilization of the combined experiences and skills of the three Custodian Supervisors has been detrimental.

# Service Levels

## 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. Some of these meetings were scheduled by senior management based upon the roles and responsibilities of the individuals and some meetings were ad hoc as the result of the time the consultant spent walking the campus buildings. At each of the campuses, representative clients were interviewed to determine how the faculty, students and staff perceived the custodial services in terms of several criteria. 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:

- The vast majority of the assistant deans and deans interviewed were highly critical of the level of cleanliness in their buildings. The responses ranged from disappointment to mild outrage.
- Most academic leaders believed that the custodians were clearly given workload in excess of their resources but, even if given extra staff, they felt that the custodians were poorly trained and had a general lack an understanding of what was expected of them on a daily and periodic basis.
- There was a strong sense of empathy for many of the individual custodians along with a voicing of opinion that there were clearly some custodians who did little or no work and were excessive in work absences. This was seen as being unfair to the majority who were perceived as good workers who needed only better skills and tools to be more effective.
- Most academic leaders felt the move of the Grave Shift to work hours and the corresponding absence of custodial staff between 1:30 am and 6:30 am was a mistake and that they could track the decline of service to classrooms



and academic buildings to the change in shift schedule. Several were also upset that they were not consulted nor advised of the shift change by Facilities.

- Examples of specific academic concerns were:
  - restrooms not cleaned or stocked
  - carpets not vacuumed
  - classrooms not cleaned at night
  - no understanding of what service tasks are expected daily or weekly
  - no project work (floors, carpets, restrooms, glass)
  - new buildings degrading rapidly
  - number of public and student complaints being received
  - embarrassment when holding public events

#### Administrative Staff:

Non academic responses to the questions on the quality of custodial services tracked more towards being supportive of the custodians as SMC employees and being very critical of the management team in Facilities. In general, most individuals interviewed have had opportunities over the years to speak with a number of custodians, and many communicate their needs and issues directly to the custodians since that is a direct way to obtain quick response. Administrative responses were generally very detailed, specific and often pointed.

- Communication from Facilities is poor and often comes in the form of excuses rather than action.
- No one has ever communicated what departments should expect from custodial on a daily, weekly and periodic basis.

- There is no process in place to track the progress of work orders and provide the customer with status updates on when they can expect completion. Work orders are perceived to frequently disappear in the abyss of work backlog and updates are seldom received.
- Custodians are poorly trained and equipped and are given more work than is reasonable to expect which leads to low morale and absenteeism.
- When asked why they don't vacuum custodians often respond they do not have working vacuums and often resort to sweeping carpets with a broom.
- Custodians are disenfranchised from the rest of the Facilities organization and they feel that they and their work do not matter.

The primary concern of faculty and staff clients was the condition of restrooms, followed by that of public corridors, entries, and stairwells. There was also a universal lack of understanding about what should be expected from the custodians in terms of tasks and frequencies. Of all the faculty, students and staff interviewed, none had any idea of what the cleaning schedules were for the areas they occupied. At the most basic level, faculty and staff expressed a concern that they did not even know if the restrooms were to be mopped daily or not. All of this speaks to the lack of transparency for the custodial program as currently structured.

Students:

- Students almost universally said that the campus was far dirtier than they expected and that classrooms and restrooms often were found dirty in the morning hours which meant that nothing had been done the night before. Several students told of going from restroom stall to restroom stall to find one with toilet paper even in the mornings. A number of students commented on the amount of trash that is seen in the planter beds around the buildings and that paper, cups, etc. will remain in the same place for weeks before being removed.

- Of special concern to some students was the condition of the Student Lounge and Computer Center in Cayton, both of which are poorly maintained. These areas are heavily used and students often sit on the floors of the lounge even though the carpets are dirty. The cafeteria, however, was complimented by most as an example of what student areas should be maintained like in spite of the heavy usage it receives. Several students commented that custodial staff were always visible in the cafeteria and kept it up well.
- Approximately half of the students said that the schools they attended before coming to SMC were much cleaner and the environment just seemed to be better cared for. A few likened the restrooms in some academic buildings to what you would find in a gas station while driving down the interstate.
- As a whole, a lack of cleanliness of the campus buildings was noticed by almost all the students and some were quite vocal about this. It must be also be clarified that the student discussions were held during summer sessions when the student population was low and very few of the students interviewed were new to the campus.

#### Custodians:

The custodians interviewed had universal concerns related to how the current situation in their work environment impacts them and their work. The custodians who were interviewed were, for the most part, those who have good attendance records, strong work ethics and are carrying the bulk of the workload during the ongoing situation of high employee absences. A number of custodians chose not to be interviewed and there appeared to be an effort on the part of some to discourage others from speaking with the consultant.

The custodial comments are summarized as follows:

- When asked what they enjoyed most about working as a custodian at SMC, the response was almost unanimous that the campus environment, friendliness of the faculty/staff, and the reputation of the campus all made their work here enjoyable.
- When asked what they liked least about their work, the responses were split between those who said that senior management in Facilities has no understanding of their work and did not hold unproductive staff accountable; the others said there were too many custodians who had no desire to work and were only there to take advantage of the generous District benefits.
- When asked what they would change, the custodians had a variety of responses which fell into three categories:
  - A change in senior management to be replaced by managers who had more custodial knowledge, who would deal with unproductive employees more effectively and who would spend time observing their work so they could feel like someone actually valued what they did.
  - A change in the District's policies towards attendance including holding attendance abusers accountable as well as removing the 50% work absence pay for those who quickly exhaust their leave balances.
  - Review the amount of work the custodians have with the addition of new buildings, redistribute the work more equitably and do away with some of the unfair work assignments given by the Night Shift supervisor.
- A number of custodians expressed the feeling of shame when they had to face students who asked them why the classrooms and restrooms were so dirty. The students have no way of knowing which custodial shift is

responsible so those servicing the areas during the Day Shift receive the brunt of student frustration.

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 important at this point in the report that the consultant make note of the fact that the building tours were conducted in late July, a time during which most campuses have deep cleaned and renovated the majority of classrooms, restrooms and public areas including floor stripping/waxing, carpet cleaning, machine scrubbing of hard floors, window washing and wall washing. There was no evidence of any of this activity having taken place despite the fact that it was six weeks after commencement. Conversely, this is also the time of year when student and staff populations are low and custodians should be able to more easily clean buildings and maintain them at a higher level.

Although detailed custodial inspections were not conducted, the consultant was able to make the following observations after touring the majority of buildings at all SMC locations:

- Most buildings show evidence of only cursory, infrequent custodial cleaning. Entries, corridors and stairwells are generally in poor condition with soil, stains and dust that indicate no cleaning has been done for weeks if not months. There is a definite difference in cleaning levels between those buildings serviced by Day and Mid Shift versus the bulk of the campus which is serviced by the Night Shift. The majority of the custodial shortcomings fall within the scope of the Night Shift's responsibility.
- Restrooms showed modest levels of cleaning with sinks, mirrors and fixtures showing signs of periodic cleaning but with little attention to detail and no efforts at dusting, cleaning of floor edges, stall partitions or the machine scrubbing of floors. Almost all floors showed weeks and months of dark buildup in the corners and along the cove base. As a result, many of

the restrooms had a dank, musty odor. Restrooms in administrative areas tended to be in the same or worse condition than those in high student use buildings despite the marked difference in volume of usage. While touring restrooms in the early morning during the week and on Saturday, several were found which showed no evidence of having been cleaned the night before as evidenced by empty paper dispensers, soiled fixtures and significant paper waste on the floors.

- Carpets were almost universally neglected. There is minimal evidence of vacuuming on a regular basis and deep cleaning by the extraction method appears to be a rare occurrence. The carpet in the ESL facility can be best described as filthy and was one of the worse seen on Campus. Given the large volume of carpet in the buildings, the protection of investment in this flooring is critical although little or no deep cleaning of these surfaces is being done. Most custodians are not issued vacuums but are issued small brooms and lobby dust pans instead with the intent that they sweep surface debris off of carpets.
- There was also no evidence of the refinishing of resilient tile floors and the deep cleaning of other types of flooring. Locker and shower room floors in the new Core Performance Center are not being maintained well and have dark areas of imbedded soil along with buildup in the showers. Given that this area is used by athletes and staff in bare feet, maintaining clean and microbe free floors is essential.
- Classroom cleaning was found to be marginal. Daily services appear to be limited to emptying waste receptacles, cleaning white boards and removing gross litter from the floors. There appears to be no cleaning of student work surfaces. proper cleaning of floors, dusting or cleaning of light switches, push plates and other human contact surfaces.
- Office cleaning services appeared to be limited to emptying wastebaskets. Most offices had visible dust and light debris on the floors and appeared to

seldom be vacuumed. Most occupants confirmed that they seldom see a custodian with a vacuum and that when carpets are serviced, a broom and dustpan are often used to remove surface soil. A number of occupants have purchased personal vacuums for shared use of the employees because of the lack of custodian vacuuming of offices and corridors.

- Some of the custodians have well developed organizational and technical skills which, together with a strong work ethic, enable certain parts of the campus to be better maintained than others. The vast majority, however, fall well within the observations noted above.
- Most telling for this consultant was a visit to the District Board Room on a Saturday morning when the meeting room was found to be in the same condition as it had been left the previous Tuesday night with papers and litter on the chairs and floor along with molding food remnants in the waste receptacles.

As a result of reviewing the custodial program and spending time with custodial leadership and staff, the following general observations can be made as to some of the underlying reasons for the shortcomings of cleaning effectiveness across the District.

- There is a legacy culture that surrounds the custodial program, long preceding the brief tenure of the current Director. Although changes have taken place over the years in personnel, resource allocations, size of the area serviced and in how the custodians are deployed, custodial services at SMC are still functioning as they were thirty years or more ago. There has been little incorporation of modern perspectives on cleaning and the updated procedures that go along with them. Conversely, the current leadership team is not as engaged in monitoring and supporting custodial services as in years past.
- The current management model is not meeting the needs of the campus as it relates to custodial services. The three shifts and supervisors are isolated

from one another, there is no team building, no cooperation and no communication. This is devastating to the delivery of services to a campus as complex as SMC.

- There is little or no training program to provide the custodians with the knowledge and skills necessary to work effectively, intelligently and safely. The same is true of the supervisors who are also in need of training to better equip them to work together in a more cohesive manner and to embrace modern methods and procedures for service delivery, quality control and employee performance management.
- There is a lack of clearly defined roles and responsibilities that incorporate the Lead Custodians, Supervisors, Assistant Director and Director. Position titles and lines of authority are in place, but the lack of definitive roles and responsibilities allows individuals to overstep or circumvent their individual part in delivering quality services to the campus. This leads to individuals assigning blame to others rather than being able to closely examine whether they are meeting their own objectives as they relate to specific responsibilities. Most of the individuals involved do not have a clear vision of the differences between authority vs. responsibility, coordination vs. cooperation, accountability vs. support, or communication vs. direction.
- Available resources have a significant impact on service delivery. Out of the 53 budgeted custodial positions, the production shift on nights has 27 custodians and one supervisor to service the bulk of the approximately 920,000 cleanable square feet of building space. At the time of this review, only 25 of the 27 Night Shift custodial positions were filled and average attendance was 65% - 70% daily. The Day and Mid shifts have smaller cleaning responsibility with a large amount of their time consumed with other campus services such as event setups, moves, etc. Even prior to the opening of the Center for Media and Design, available custodial labor was marginal and the addition of almost 100,000 square feet has made it even more untenable. A reallocation of resources, refocus of Day and Mid work



priorities, addition of more staff or reprioritization of cleaning services are needed to create more balance between resources and workload. A more detailed analysis of actual custodial cleaning workload needs to be done in order to determine optimum staffing levels although the current daily absenteeism rate of 25%+ renders staffing numbers moot if such large numbers of employees are absent on a continuing basis. If the current staffing level is taken at face value, there are a sufficient number of custodians on the payroll to adequately service the campus. In considering the actual number of staff that report to work on a daily basis, however, there is never enough labor on the Night Shift to adequately clean the buildings assigned.

- Of significant concern to the campus community and the custodial staff was the decision made by Facilities in 2016 to move the production Grave Shift from a 10:00 pm - 6:30 am work shift to a 5:00 pm - 1:30 am work shift. Traditionally, most campuses that have classes up to 10:00 pm or later will use a Grave Shift to clean general assignment classroom buildings and other high use public areas. This schedule enables the custodial staff to begin their work shift just as the campus population vacates, allowing the custodians to clean and service campus buildings with no conflicts or impacts on students, faculty or staff. The change in shift has resulted in unsatisfactory cleaning of classrooms and public areas as well as the need for the Day Shift to begin their day by patrolling all Night Shift restrooms to ensure they are ready for the morning arrival of the Campus population. The hours of the Night Shift should be returned back to the original Grave Shift hours of 10 pm - 6:30 am. This would eliminate shift overlap, enable the Grave Shift to be fully productive at the start of their shift, and allow ample time to clean the main public use buildings at an appropriate level without conflict. The Grave Shift hours will also ensure a 24 hour presence of custodial staff to identify and report any emergency or maintenance issues that may arise in the middle of the night.

- The demand on custodial staff for non-cleaning functions, such as setups and moves, is significant and has not been factored into campus custodial allocations. SMC needs a definitive system to catalog and track non-cleaning workload and translate that into a metric to measure the impact on overall cleaning service delivery. Each hour of labor diverted to non-cleaning tasks has a commensurate impact on the primary service mission of cleaning the campus.
- The greatest impact on the custodial resource issue is the high absenteeism rate. With the large work areas assigned to each custodian on Night shift, the absence of one employee requires the absorption of that workload into the balance of the crew. With daily absences running as high as 10 - 12 employees, the resulting workload impact is significant and results in more substandard work being delivered as well as imposing undue physical demands on the employees who faithfully report to work.
- Work standards are essentially informal, and do not serve as a primary basis for employee training, quality control, or performance management. For the most part, new custodians do not receive the level of orientation training as in years past and a number of employees have received no training at all and have been left to their own devices in determining how best to complete the work. This system relies more on a “do as I say” process rather than a prescriptive set of standards that everyone acknowledges and follows. An example is mopping of restroom floors where the act of moving a damp mop across the floor meets the verbal instructions provided to custodians as opposed to a specific set of procedures that outline exactly how the work is to be done and what the desired outcome is. Many custodians are left to develop their own conclusions as to what constitutes a job well done and what the specific objectives of their work tasks are beyond “cleaning.”
- With some notable exceptions most custodians related their job of cleaning as the act of "doing the best that I can under the circumstances". Most

never mentioned disinfecting of public contact areas such as restrooms, drinking fountains, door handles, push plates, or hand rails. Their demonstrated use of chemicals and cleaning procedures illustrated a low level of knowledge of the desired objectives of providing a safe and clean environment for faculty, students and staff. On the other hand, a select few custodians who were interviewed had skills they brought to SMC from their previous employment and they had a good grasp on the mechanics of cleaning, disinfection and work safety.

- Quality control programs are sporadic and not consistent in their application or intent. Only one of the supervisors demonstrated a best practice of ongoing inspection of work that fully engages the custodians and that documents employee cleaning performance which, in turn, directly feeds into employee performance evaluations. The recent distribution of inspection forms by management has not altered the past practices and they have not been put into use by the supervisors. As a result, cleaning deficiencies are allowed to continue or to return after a short period of correction.
- Cleaning procedures at SMC remain essentially unchanged from what they were two decades or more ago. There have been few improvements in chemicals, equipment, and cleaning procedures, and a number of cleaning practices that have long since been abandoned by the custodial industry are still in place here. A review of the custodial equipment rooms revealed new equipment in unused condition, relatively new equipment that was no longer functional and old equipment that was poorly maintained. There is no system in place to issue, monitor and quickly repair equipment. For a staff of almost 50 custodians there are only 5-6 working vacuum cleaners.
- The cleaning of restrooms is further impacted by the amount of deferred maintenance on the restroom ceilings, fixtures, walls, floors and dispensers. There are several types of tissue and towel dispensers which require custodians to stock multiple types of paper. A project to standardize all of

the dispensers has been launched but its completion date is unclear since shop backlog in the craft area has kept this project from moving forward.

- Supply logistics are ineffective. Recently, the custodians have run low or out of stock on restroom paper, trash liners and other supplies. In the past, poor inventory and ordering practices have led to delivery cycles not keeping pace with consumption. The responsibility for custodial inventory has recently been reassigned and the responsible supervisor has made great strides in resolving legacy supply issues although it will take another full academic quarter before the new program effectiveness can be determined.
- The process by which custodial chemicals are selected is not clearly defined. Most custodians have no idea why the chemicals change and don't know until new products are introduced unless they are part of a pilot test being done by management. Given his past custodial experience, the Director has made some changes in custodial chemicals that are soon to be introduced. While positive, these changes did not result from a participative process that allowed supervisors and employees to engage in product review and the selection of chemical systems to be evaluated which has left some custodial staff unconvinced that these products will work well for them. A definitive process for evaluating and selecting cleaning chemicals would help staff take ownership of management decisions.
- Equipment inventory is mixed between recent purchases of new high productivity floor machines, outdated conventional carpet and floor machines and an insufficient number of much needed vacuum cleaners some of which are in marginal or non functional condition. The investment in the new equipment is significant, however, there is no program in place to monitor usage, ensure proper maintenance and to provide ongoing oversight of the equipment condition. Much of the equipment examined is

of little use and most of it sees no usage since the daily cleaning workload limits time to do any project work.

- Finally, one of the primary factors in the poor service delivery is the lack of a set of well-defined and well-understood goals and objectives for the custodial unit. Staff have no understanding of the key role they play in supporting the academic and community service mission of SMC and they do not feel as though they are part of something bigger. The Facilities Department has a mission statement which declares

*"It is our mission to provide a safe and comfortable learning environment for all students and staff at SMC in accordance with the College's mission and vision, and in alignment with SMC's institutional goals."*

It is not clear that any of the custodians are aware of this or that they can identify with the statement, nor do they know if they have any specific goals and objectives related to that mission that they can embrace. All employees need a clear reason for their labors as well as an understanding of what their contributions mean to the institution. This is one of the main contributing factors to what the campus clients described as low morale.

# **Cost of Service Delivery**

## 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

Currently, within the California Community College system, custodial investments in salaries run from a low of approximately \$3.00 per Cleanable Square Foot to a high of just over \$5.00 per Cleanable Square Foot. The broad variance is somewhat skewed by the salary range differences that are found based upon geographical area. SMC has an approximate investment of \$4.89 per Cleanable Square Foot, making it at the upper end of the scale in terms of salary dollars.

### 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. The intent is to reflect the fact that providing custodial services to a specific square footage of building space is directly impacted by the number of students who occupy and use that space on a regular basis. 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.



# **Staffing Levels and Custodial Assignments**

## Staffing Levels and Custodial Assignments

In determining whether staffing levels and individual cleaning assignments were consistent with industry standards, analysis of individual custodial work assignments is required. Unfortunately, the SMC custodial unit does not have valid custodial workload data that identifies the specific square footage assigned to each custodian nor the actual amount of time that has been calculated for each custodian to complete their work assignment. The same is true for many of the standard metrics that are common to higher education custodial programs when considering how custodial labor is allocated. Examples of these include color coded small scale building plans showing the precise custodial work assignments, square footage of each assignment, breakdown by space type of each assignment, level of effort for each space type, daily/weekly/periodic task schedules for each assignment and special project task schedules (carpet cleaning, floor refinishing, high glass cleaning, wall washing, etc.) for all assignments. As a result, the consultant was required to rely upon observations and the informal discussions with custodians, leads and supervisors to determine the following.

Custodians on Day and Mid Shifts have some individual cleaning assignments but, for the most part, these are part time assignments that are combined with two or more hours of general campus services such as providing porter service for heavily used restrooms. The Night Shift has almost no metrics that would reveal how the work is distributed and, in fact, the custodial work assignments are changed frequently, often more than once per week. Given these circumstances, the consultant is left with the conclusion that the analysis of individual custodial work assignments is not feasible and would be limited to only the few part time assignments on the first two shifts which are not representative of the entire work unit nor are they reflective of how productive the custodians are for a full shift of cleaning services.

Absent the necessary metrics, as was noted in the previous section on resource investment, the total cleanable square footage of the District was divided by the number of custodians available for cleaning services; for this purpose, supervisors were excluded from the calculations. With an identified result of 18,402 Cleanable Square Feet per custodian, the District has funded adequate staffing to provide service levels that could approach APPA Level II. As noted earlier in this report, however, there is a significant delta between funded custodial positions and available custodial positions based upon the historical high levels of absenteeism. This is further complicated by the absence of a well organized work distribution plan, adequate training, well defined cleaning procedures and appropriate equipment and tools. When considered together, the investment levels of the District into custodial services must be tempered by the current realities of a program that is in disarray and one that is currently delivering services at a minimal level.

Many Community College districts within California are able to consistently delivery custodial services at APPA Level II with staffs that have a Cleanable Square Feet to Custodian ratio of 21,000 CSF to 25,000 CSF. In other higher education environments, 25,000 sq. ft. per custodian is considered a normal work allocation and high levels of service are delivered at those rates. It is reasonable to expect that with strong leadership, definitive work procedures, good training, proper tools/equipment, and a balanced distribution of work between shifts and employees that the SMC custodial unit could also produce similar results at the current staffing levels.

# **Supplies and Equipment**

## Supplies and Equipment

As noted earlier, supplies and equipment have a direct impact on the cleaning results of the custodial staff. In reviewing the chemicals and equipment in use at SMC, the following observations were made.

### Chemicals:

In an institutional education environment, it is vital to select custodial chemicals that are not only safe to use and effective in cleaning, but that can also perform in a manner that ensures a healthy environment for students, faculty, staff and visitors. This is especially true for the disinfectant products used to clean restrooms, locker rooms, showers and drinking fountains. Currently SMC has moved to green label products that are certified for environmental and worker safety concerns. At the time of this report, Facilities senior management has decided to change the current chemical line and replace it with another; both are hydrogen peroxide based and both are green label certified so there will not be a significant difference in environmental or safety issues and the primary issue will be whether the products provided to the custodians are effective in cleaning or whether they will require extra effort to deliver satisfactory results.

Regardless of what products are selected, the most important factor is to have in place a detailed process by which custodial chemicals are screened, evaluated and tested before implementing them in the workplace. Historically, changes in cleaning chemicals at SMC have been made as a unilateral decision by senior management with minimal involvement by the custodial staff and supervisors. While employee involvement is not necessary, the exclusion of the line staff can often result in resistance to change and a lack of ownership for any new products that are introduced. In addition, the exclusion of staff in the evaluation process

often means a missed opportunity to provide employees with some insight and training into the decision making process and how chemicals impact their work.

Another significant concern is that employees do not have direct access to, nor have many received training on, the chemical Safety Data Sheets (SDS) that provide critical health and safety information on the products being used. OSHA requires that all employees receive training on how to read the Safety Data Sheets and the sheets must be accessible to all staff whenever anyone is working. In the case of the current products being used, both the disinfectant cleaner and the general purpose cleaner are classified as a serious eye hazard and the Safety Data Sheets provide specific information of what to do in case of eye or skin exposure. This is further complicated by the fact that custodians are not issued eye protection to guard against exposure when applying the chemicals to sinks or restroom fixtures and most Night Shift custodians also reported that they buy their own gloves because when they ask for gloves from the supervisor they are often told they are out of stock.

#### Equipment:

Equipment inventories at SMC are adequate in volume, however, much of the hard floor and carpet cleaning equipment has been poorly maintained and most of the vacuums are in poor to inoperable condition. As noted earlier, the practice of issuing small brooms and lobby dust pans to sweep surface debris from carpets has no place in a modern higher education custodial program. Recent purchases of walk behind automatic carpet cleaning and high temperature extraction equipment will likely end up in similar condition unless more definitive procedures are established for training and accountability that tracks the usage, cleaning and maintenance of all custodial equipment.

The custodial equipment on hand needs to be fully inventoried and those items that are no longer functional or cost effective to repair and return to service should be salvaged. Equipment that can be repaired should be completely gone through, put back in service, and the records and cost of repair logged into a

maintenance record. All equipment should be issued from the storage area only with authorization from one of the supervisors and its condition should be inspected upon return to the storage area. A clipboard log that shows who used the machine, the dates of use and the sign off of the supervisor should be attached to each machine for monitoring of condition and establishing accountability.

Basic custodial hand tools are also lacking with insufficient and inadequate custodial carts, mops/buckets, dust mops, vacuum cleaners and high cleaning/dusting tools. Many custodians were found sharing basic tools since there were not enough to go around and the movement of tools from one building to another as the work shift progressed was found to be a common occurrence on the Night Shift.

Although not directly related to this review, the assessment revealed that custodial staff, primarily Day Shift custodians, often engage in moving furniture and delivering and setting up tables and chairs. The furnishings for setups and special events are provided by rental companies with the custodians providing the necessary labor as needed. Since this is an ongoing District need, equipping the custodial unit with District owned tables, chairs and risers would enable the custodians to be able to respond to setup requests on a more timely basis rather than waiting for deliveries from vendors. There appears to be adequate storage space available for a modest inventory of 200 chairs and 40 tables which would meet the majority of small to medium setup requests and enable the custodial staff to schedule the setup and takedown work around cleaning schedules rather than vendor driven time lines.

# **Custodial Procedures**



## Custodial Procedures

In line with the examination of custodial chemicals and equipment, an examination of custodial procedures was completed. The process used was to interview Custodian Supervisors, Lead Custodians and Custodians. During the interviews of leadership positions, specific questions were asked about cleaning tasks, frequencies, equipment, training of new employees, periodic re-training, and general custodial technology. Interviews with custodians were more work-specific and focused on asking custodians to relate exactly how they did their work, with sessions often conducted in classrooms, office, and restroom areas.

In considering the results of the interviews, 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 processes 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. There are also a number of unique areas used for exercise, yoga and sports related activities where disinfection of the public contact surfaces are essential rather than the casual approach to cleaning these that takes place at the current time.

As noted earlier, custodial practices and procedures at SMC have remained relatively unchanged for the past 20 years or more. After having spent considerable time evaluating the situation , the consultant has arrived at the following conclusions with regards to custodial methods and procedures.

- Cleaning methods and practices have been handed down from each generation of custodians to the next.
- Custodian Supervisors in the past have either been unwilling or unable to address the actual work in the field because of their own personal workload and/or the lack of technical knowledge in the custodial industry. Without

interviewing the past Custodial Supervisors, it is not possible to reflect on their reasons for not improving the program or keeping it up to date.

- The custodial program at SMC lacks leadership with strong technical skills in this program area. There is only one supervisor within the department who understands the essential elements of workload distribution, restroom/locker room disinfecting techniques, equipment selection for productivity and cost effectiveness, proper chemical selection, and advanced floor care techniques. Absent these resident skills, there is no one on two of the three shifts to train the existing or new staff in the proper procedures, so good practices go wanting. The combined skill level of the three current supervisors may be adequate to maintain the status quo but not to drive the significant changes needed.
- Even some of the most basic custodial procedures are absent, most noticeably the dust mopping of hard floors and the regular vacuuming of carpeting. The consultant observed very few dust mops in use and saw evidence of only a small number of back pack vacuums for the large staff who service carpeted areas. Although the equipment inventory shows a total of 20 vacuums in stock, none of the employees interviewed believed that figure to be correct and most felt it was less than half of that amount. Also, the back pack vacuums in use were found to be too heavy for some employees and the exhaust system created safety or conflict for those staff having longer hair. Absent regular vacuuming, carpet life is reduced by more than 50% and the amount of allergens, bacteria, dust, pollen and other contaminants that accumulate represents a potential health hazard for occupants.
- There are some highly skilled custodians on the staff who have worked at other colleges, hospitals and school districts. These individuals struggle with the chemicals and equipment provided, but their input is not utilized because they are not in leadership positions. The use of journey-level teams to explore improvements in the program has never been explored.

- Performance management issues have been at the forefront of the custodial program for years. Senior management has spent much time pursuing issues of attendance, poor performance and work injuries. This is time that could otherwise be spent seeking improvements in the program. The old adage of spending all of the time fighting fires seems to apply here.
- A strategic plan for addressing the custodial procedures problem at SMC needs to be developed, in consort with a similar plan to revolutionize the custodial work assignments and the way in which work is distributed. The plans need to be augmented with training, monitored with a quality control program, and reinforced with performance management. Anything less will not result in the desired outcome of providing a clean and safe academic environment for faculty, students, and staff.

# **Safety and Security**

## 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.

Worker safety was examined in terms of common custodial hazards. Campus Risk Management offers periodic safety training through a third party for all custodians although it was not clear how consistent custodial participation was and how familiar the custodians were with District safety rules and requirements.

Aside from the District-wide safety efforts, there were a number of safety issues observed during the assessment.

- Safety Data Sheet training at SMC has not been conducted regularly and SDS sheets were observed to not be available at each custodial locker, nor kept up to date. This is required as part of the OSHA Worker Right to Know regulations.
- Use of the current disinfectant and general purpose chemicals requires protective eye wear and gloves as directed by the product SDS. Eye protection is not issued to the custodians nor are protective gloves readily available to the Night Shift staff some of whom purchase their own as a result.
- Custodial lockers in some areas have electrical panels in them and most are not marked with the OSHA required safety zone to provide clearance

between the panels and any storage. As a result, panel doors could be obstructed or broom/mop handles might be leaned against the panel boxes.

- Although ladder safety was included as part of the third party safety training, a number of ladders were observed that had no non-slip foot pads and numerous old wood ladders were still obviously in use. The absence of fiberglass ladders with adequate safety features poses a safety risk for any custodial work that requires ladders.

Overall, the District sites visited appeared to have a good general safety ethic and both staff and supervision were concerned about worker safety but not to the point of the employees pushing for safer work conditions or the supervisors being proactive to ensure the employees are provided with training and personal protective equipment needed. Consistent with industry statistics, safe work practices are generally found to be in direct relationship to cleaning results, workload distribution, and employee work-related training. Campus worker's compensation statistics also followed the same pattern with more work related injuries than expected for a unit of professional custodians.

## District Risks

As part of the assessment, the process sought to identify any areas and behavior that might represent risks to the District in terms of non-compliance, litigation, or other potential losses. From a risk management perspective, the following issues are notable.

- There is exposure in the lack of a definitive and well executed Worker's Right to Know Program at SMC. Both OSHA and California's SB 198 mandate a comprehensive program of hazard analysis, hazard mitigation, and SDS training and maintenance. If inspected by regulators, the custodial program would not pass on a number of requirements of these statutes.

- OSHA requirements for electrical safety and ladder safety are not in compliance in all custodial lockers as noted in the Safety comments above.
- The lack of available personal protective equipment could be problematic for the campus should a chemical or cross infection injury occur.
- It was noted by some of the custodians that eye wash stations are often not functioning which would hamper their ability to quickly wash their eyes should a cleaning chemical splash on them. The Facilities plumbing staff should have a regular scheduled inspection and repair program for all campus eyewash stations to correct this. The most noticeable example is the self contained eyewash station located in the chemical storage area of the Night Shift Custodial meeting area in the basement of Liberal Arts.
- The Cosmetology Department in Drescher Hall receives unscheduled inspections from the State Board of Cosmetology. It is the consultant's understanding that the Department has been cited and fined by the Board for unacceptable cleaning levels in the areas where students practice their skills and public patrons come to allow students to develop their skills by providing services to the public. Such citations and fines are not only an embarrassment to the District but also represent some exposure if cleaning conditions continue at unacceptable levels.

# Best Practices



## 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

## 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. Adequate and skilled leadership is the single most important element in reversing the negative aspects of the current custodial environment. Management needs to regain lost credibility with the campus community as well as with a custodial staff that is in great need of a revitalization and a

clear vision for their critical role of support services in the academic and community service environment. Additionally, a strategic approach is needed in order to build partnerships with the District academic and administrative departments and to create a more transparent organization that replaces the current silo model for Facilities.

Options for accomplishing the above include:

1. Implement an accelerated program of intense training to improve the skills of the incumbents at all three levels of leadership. Before beginning such a process, an assessment of the ability of the individuals to grow in skill levels and to respond positively to such an effort should be conducted; these assessments would then serve as decision support for determinations on investments in training vs. replacement.
2. Appoint one or more Interim managers in the key positions over custodial whose primary tasks are to lead the development and implementation of a strategic turnaround for the custodial services of the District. Individuals selected for these key roles must possess the skill sets noted earlier in order to be successful in achieving the necessary course corrections and paving the way for a more stable organization that can be inherited by qualified permanent leadership in a year or two.
3. In conjunction with #1 and/or #2 above, conduct a targeted recruitment for one or more of the management positions with a more focused outreach and a well defined set of selection criteria that better ensures the attraction and retention of managers who have a proven track record of turnaround leadership and the development of partnerships with campus constituents. Such recruitment/s should not occur until the leadership (current or interim) has had at least 90 days to develop a strategic plan and

begin implementation. This would enable the newly recruited manager/s to be folded into a plan in progress so that their role/s could be clearly articulated in the recruitment process.

- Consistent with decisions made on the leadership team, a strategic plan should be commissioned that integrates the list of recommended actions selected by the District into a comprehensive document that outlines the steps to be taken, the means to accomplish them, a time table for each of the actions, identification of necessary resources and a clearly defined set of roles and responsibilities for all Facilities participants. Development of the plan should be led by senior Facilities management and include key administrative officers from Business Services, Human Resources, Campus Counsel and one or two academic leaders. This expanded group should be used as an advisory board to meet periodically and validate the direction that the Plan is taking and identify necessary adjustments to the plan during the period of formulation. An employee subcommittee of one line manager and two custodians from each of the three work shifts should also be assembled in order to obtain employee input and allow the staff to take ownership of the plan. Employee participation should be in a separate venue focused primarily on those issues that directly impact work in the field where their perspectives can bring the greatest value.
- Implement a training program that ensures all custodians at SMC understand the basic principles of custodial tasks as well as a deeper understanding of what their roles are and what the desired objectives of their work product are. This is a fundamental requirement and one without which progress in other areas will be hindered. All staff need to have this fundamental understanding of their work and it should be consistent throughout the custodial unit. The training program should also include classroom and field training on each of the primary custodial cleaning tasks (sweeping/mopping, restroom cleaning, disinfection, floor and carpet cleaning) as well as more technical training on how chemicals work and a

set of custodial specific safety training topics (chemical, electrical, ladder and slip/fall). Appendix A provides a recommended curriculum for such a training program based upon the consultant's current training offerings.

- Training for the Custodian Supervisors is also a critical need. Custodial Supervisors need to interface more and network with one another. The current process does not provide for regular group meetings to compel the three supervisors to sit down at the table with their managers facilitating discussions on issues of common interest. There is currently minimal interaction between the supervisors and their respective work shifts. Between the three supervisors, there is more than 30 years of custodial supervisory experience; failure to leverage this combined skill set has been detrimental to the District. A solution to this would be to have mandatory group training for the supervisors where they could share common information and engage in networking to solve mutual problems. This would also ensure that they are all exposed to the same skill development opportunities as a unit rather than individually. This training would also serve to establish baselines for supervisor performance standards and could be included in the performance evaluation process to ensure reinforcement. Such training would also help to identify any deficiencies in individual management skills which, in turn, might allow senior management to target additional specialized training or to segue an individual into more appropriate assignments based upon abilities. A recommended Supervisor training curriculum is also included in Appendix A.
- The Night Shift needs to be moved back to the traditional Grave Shift hours of 10 pm to 6:30 am in order to provide the production shift of employees with adequate time to service the District facilities after the last classes have ended and faculty and staff have vacated the buildings. The shift was changed to its current time of 5:00 pm to 1:30 am in response to line management's inability to manage employee behavior and performance

issues and senior management's failure to address the problem rather than pursue a reactive solution that has hurt the service delivery of the work unit. The majority of academic leaders interviewed claimed a direct link between deteriorating custodial services in classrooms and academic buildings and the change in the Night Shift work hours. An examination of class schedules also reveals that the current work shift that ends at 1:15 am does not provide time for adequate servicing of classrooms, adjacent restrooms, circulations space and specialty venues such as the Broad Theatre after regular hours of occupancy. Once the change is made, the staffing between shifts can be rebalanced in order to provide the necessary resources so the Night Shift can fully deploy the recommended changes in work assignments, training, procedures, and tools/equipment in order to meet the custodial needs of the District.

- The custodial work station and team assignments should be completely assessed and the workload redistributed between both custodians and work shifts. Current work assignments on the Night Shift are unequal and the use of work teams masks the actual amount of work assigned to each custodian because the teams do not have assignments from the supervisor but frequently just divide up the work themselves. In any case, if the rare situation of 100% attendance took place on the Night Shift today, individual square footage would still be above 32,000 sq. per custodian; a workload that can produce satisfactory results only in a well organized and equipped custodial program. In reality, with average daily absenteeism of 5 - 10 custodians per night, the workload for this production shift is closer to 50,000 sq. ft. per custodian and individual assignments run higher since the work is not distributed equitably. The current system cannot be addressed by changing 5, 10 or 15 assignments; a process that changes 100% of the existing assignments as well as redistributing the staff and workload between shifts is strongly recommended. It is also important to consider an evaluation and implementation process that engages custodial staff in the process so that the staff can take ownership of the new assignment

results; engaging the subcommittee noted in the Strategic Planning recommendation would be recommended since this would continue the momentum of creating a participatory environment as part of the change process. With an appropriate rezoning of the custodial assignments based upon actual time required to service specific work areas, the entire District custodial workload can be balanced, relief and project positions can be allocated and metrics can be created to facilitate monitoring for success and enabling future refinements to be accomplished more easily. With 50 working Custodian and Lead Custodian positions, the ratio of Cleanable Square Feet to custodian is 18,402 sq. ft. With equitable distribution and remapping of work assignments, an average work assignment of 20,000 sq. ft. per custodian is achievable. The recommended changes in work assignments would not be based upon square footage alone, however, since space types vary greatly in the productivity rates for custodians and some work assignments of 18,000 sq. ft. require the same time and effort as others that encompass 30,000 sq. ft. Classrooms are typically the most labor intensive type of space while library space, sports floors and chemistry labs have the least labor requirements. All of this, however, needs to be balanced against the large amount of absenteeism that negatively impacts individual workload for those who report to work each day. Options to address the absenteeism issue will be discussed below.

- Custodial staffing needs to be rebalanced among the three shifts. In addition to previously changing the work hours of the Night Shift as noted earlier, senior Facilities management reassigned a number of employees from the Night Shift to the Mid and Day shifts, reducing the resources on the main production shift and overstaffing the other shifts when compared to their traditional roles. The current Day Shift roster of 14 employees is more than double that of most other Community College campuses with comparable size and student populations many of which operate successfully with Day Shift staffs of 5 to 6 custodians. Rebalancing of the 50 represented staff positions between shifts should be done in accordance



with the creation of new and equitable work assignments on the Night Shift and a shift distribution of 38 Lead and Custodian positions on Night Shift, 6 on Mid Shift and 6 on Day Shift would represent a targeted goal to be implemented as determined by the Strategic Plan. The District should weigh the benefits of redistributing the incumbent employees versus utilizing attrition or position vacancies taking into consideration that many custodians spend 10 or more years working nights while awaiting an opportunity to work normal Day Shift hours. These employees were moved by senior management but now may feel some level of property rights and morale issues should be considered before reassignment decisions are made.

- As the Night Shift returns to Grave hours and the staffing level on that shift expands, additional leadership should be structured into the increase of staff. At minimum, there should be three Lead Custodians and one Custodian Supervisor on the shift with one Lead on the satellite run and two remaining on the main campus. With the addition of the Student Services building and the addition of 4 more employees, the satellite run could be expanded to include the new building and the staffing of that run could increase to 8 custodians with a new Custodian Supervisor taking responsibility for all work on the Student Services building and the current satellite campuses. As new satellite facilities are added, the structure of this second supervisor portfolio could expand to meet the needs.
- Immediately update all Safety Data Sheet materials at SMC and conduct updated Worker Right to Know training for all custodial staff as well as ensuring that the SDS sheets are available to staff at all work locations, preferably in laminated binders located in custodial lockers and meeting areas. Ensure that the custodial section is compliant with all SB198 requirements for an Injury and Illness Prevention Plan. If not, arrange for immediate development of a compliant plan.

- Conduct a review of the current inventory of custodial equipment and eliminate the equipment that is beyond repair and that does not fit the profile of the updated procedures and training that will emerge from the Strategic Plan. Use the employee subcommittee format to include custodial input into the examination and evaluation of new equipment. The first line of equipment that is desperately needed is vacuum cleaners, the evaluation of which could begin at any time as a demonstration to staff that their input is valued.
- Conduct a similar review of the tools assigned to custodians. At this point it is clear that the custodians need to be equipped with more and better carts, buckets/mops, dust mops and other hand tools. Once staff are trained on the function, use and purpose of the hand tools, they can also be involved in the examination and evaluation of which tools will best meet their needs.
- Performance management of custodial staff needs to be more consistent across the District. The custodial program should have a clear set of performance expectations tied to position descriptions and lists of daily, weekly, and periodic work tasks. Staff should be expected to meet these expectations as well as those related to attendance, safety and other District requirements. Managers at all levels need to be trained on how to administer employee coaching, mentoring and positive influence techniques rather than focusing on corrective action.
- Consistent with the Performance Management issues, a structured Quality Control program should be implemented that includes the following:
  - Training for the custodial staff on expected results of cleaning using the APPA standards as benchmarks.
  - Use of a consistent supervisor inspection program using forms that document the quality of custodial services based upon established

cleaning procedures and consistent with employee training programs.

- Review of inspection findings with custodians
  - Provision of retraining and coaching to improve work quality
  - Incorporating quality control inspection results into the annual Employee Evaluation process.
  - Consideration should be given to creation of a Quality Control role for one Custodian Supervisor who can conduct regular inspections of key District facilities, meet with building occupants, and document deficiencies into a work order system for correction and tracking.
- A data based Computer Maintenance Management System should be implemented to track custodial complaints, custodial work orders, and non-cleaning work requests. The current Facilities system cannot measure custodial performance on a campus-wide basis, nor is there any concrete way to document how many labor hours are taken away from primary cleaning functions by supporting setups, moves, and special events. Many of the entries for custodial work requests contain rounded numbers for labor hours and some contain no labor data at all. Such systems would enable Custodial and Facilities management to track data on a wide range of custodial issues, as well as to project workload and to document the need for additional resources based on historical data. There are a broad range of products available in this category and numerous colleges and universities currently available as references. Whatever product is selected should have an interface to keep campus clients current on the status of their complaint or request. There is no need for a custodial specific software but rather a need to ensure that the work control system used by Facilities also incorporates and supports the needs and requirements of the custodial section.

- The high rate of absenteeism in the custodial work group needs to be addressed or compensated for. Attendance records reveal that on occasions the number of employees absent from the Night Shift have been as high as 12 or more during one shift; such high absenteeism rates render even a strong custodial program incapable of delivering quality services on a consistent basis. It is recommended that the District address the high amount of absenteeism through performance management or compensate for it by exploring alternate means of providing supplementary labor for the custodial group through use of student labor, Federally funded work experience employees, Los Angeles County Court ordered community service workers, District hired 0% - 49% On Call Custodians or other similar resources. Incentive programs for good attendance should also be explored.

In addition, the creation of more available custodial labor resources with implementation of alternative cleaning schedules such as the two day per week office cleaning noted below in the Desirable section would provide substantial relief staff to fill in for absent employees and reduce the excessive amount of workload that has historically fallen upon those custodians who consistently report to work as scheduled.

- With the start of the Fall Semester on August 27, 2018, the reality of a population surge of incoming students flooding the educational facilities must be considered in light of the custodial unit's limited capability to provide adequate service levels even in the reduced population Summer Session. An expedited recruitment of limited term custodians who could reinforce the staff for a period of 120 days to 180 days is needed while the District reviews the findings of this assessment, makes the necessary leadership adjustments, develops the plans and priorities for moving forward and begins to make progress and improvements. The initial recommendation is for 10 FTE to be hired on a limited term not to exceed 6 months. At minimum, these staff could receive expedited training and be

used to fill in the large number of vacancies on the Night Shift giving that work group a better chance of meeting the minimal work obligations in the face of a 30,000 student inflow. With the management issues noted in the report, this is not the ideal situation but it is a reality that the District must meet the basic needs of the student body while it goes through the reengineering process for custodial services.

- Numerous comments were received from custodians regarding favoritism and nepotism between supervisors and individual employees. While not substantiated during the assessment, this issue should be explored to determine if such conditions exist and corrective steps taken if found to be true.

### Desirable

- The District should consider changing the frequency of cleaning for private offices from daily to 2 times per week. Daily cleaning of offices has been reduced in many public sector environments and proven to be an effective way to leverage custodial resources, freeing up labor to be applied to higher quality cleaning in restrooms, classrooms and public areas. Many private office wastebaskets contain only minimal paper when emptied every night, and the traffic in and out of them does not justify sweeping or vacuuming on a nightly basis. The large volume of administrative and faculty offices on each campus would provide significant “freed-up” labor to contribute to the overall cleaning levels in more critical areas. This recommendation can be discussed at the Senior Staff level to determine if Campus leadership would support reduced cleaning frequencies in offices if the classrooms, restrooms and public areas showed a pronounced improvement in cleaning levels. At present, the custodial services being provided to most private offices are marginal, so quality services on a two day per week schedule would be a marked improvement. Given the size of the District, it is not unreasonable to expect a labor reduction of 8 to 10

custodians that could be reinvested to provide much needed project work and to offset the significant attendance issue.

- District buildings and programs that have unique needs or venues should have custodial services tailored to meet special needs. Facilities leadership should meet with departmental leaders of such buildings, identify departmental priorities and allocate available custodial resources to best meet the needs of the department. These can then be documented in a Service Level Agreement that outlines service schedules and frequencies. Examples of such buildings or programs are Athletics, Broad Theatre, Bundy, Cosmetology and the Center for Media Design.
- The Facilities Planning design review process should be examined to determine if adequate considerations are being given to the cleanability, additional workload and standardization of building interior surfaces and fixtures. A lessons learned review of the Core Performance Center, Center for Media and Design, Performing Arts Center and the Student Services Building should be performed to see what design decisions have had a negative impact on the custodial workload and how future project design processes might be adjusted to ensure that design professional selections for floor surfaces, amount and placement of interior glass, types of restroom fixtures and size and placement of custodial lockers and storage space might be weighed against the best interests of custodial maintenance. Architects have many options to add LEED points to a design, but often the push is to have the latest or most innovative interior elements placed into a design as part of the creative effort. This can lead to unproven systems, short life span of materials, difficult custodial service challenges and significant increases in the time and effort needed to service a new building as compared to more conventional designs. The District has an excellent opportunity to examine the building projects noted from a hindsight perspective, identify issues for the custodians that have emerged from each project, and implement lessons learned into the Design Guide

and Plan Review process to ensure that the building design meets the needs of all stakeholders.

- Facilities should update their web site to include interactive features for the custodial section of the site and to increase the amount of basic information on custodial services. At minimum the site should include the following:
  - Basic contact information for the custodial department
  - Provision to file a complaint/request through the web site that generates an e-mail of feeds into the CMMS (above).
  - A list of custodial services provided including a schedule of what tasks are performed on a daily, weekly, monthly and semester basis for classrooms, offices and restrooms.
  - Information on the scope of custodial services responsibilities including number of buildings cleaned, shifts worked, and number of staff engaged in cleaning the campus.
- Custodial Procedures – along with the definitive daily and periodic custodial cleaning procedures referred to in the training bullet located in the Required section, a number of specialized custodial procedures should be examined and considered to enhance the program dependent upon resources available. These are listed as follows:
  - Implement a comprehensive locker and shower room cleaning program with foam disinfectant cleaning and regular deep cleaning of hard water deposits.
  - Identify specialized disinfectant detergent systems to use on heavy skin contact surfaces such as the equipment in the Fitness Center of the Core Performance Center and those areas of the District where floor exercise and yoga are performed. Once the appropriate

products and procedures are adopted, these should be shared with the responsible program staff so that they can also have the products available to disinfect surfaces as needed in between cleaning intervals.

- Create a more structured and regimented carpet cleaning program with definitive schedules for all areas of the District. Restructuring of the custodial work assignments as recommended earlier should free up labor to enable a more consistent floor maintenance program and having selected custodians dedicated to the carpet cleaning program will ensure better results as well as prolong the life of the equipment. The lack of a definitive carpet cleaning program is currently greatly reducing carpet life and creating potential health issues for faculty, students and staff.
- Create a more structured and regimented resilient and hard floor cleaning program with definitive schedules for all areas of the District. Restructuring of the custodial work assignments as recommended earlier should free up labor to enable a more consistent floor maintenance program and having selected custodians dedicated to the hard program will ensure better results as well as prolong the life of the equipment. Special emphasis should be placed on building entries and stairwells which are mostly concrete and currently in poor condition.
- A team approach should be established to examine new equipment, chemicals and procedures for the District. Currently the Director and Assistant Director are in charge of this process, working independently of the custodial staff. Moving the front end of this process closer to the field level of the work will free the Directors of this responsibility, plus engage an entirely new group of employees in the process. This will also provide for more networking between supervisors at a level never before accomplished. Senior



management will still remain as the decision makers, however, the cross-shift team would conduct the in-field trials of the products and use standardized evaluation forms and set criteria to work with vendors as they examine new equipment and products. Each shift can create a sub team of 2-3 custodians and Leads to conduct the field trials, fill out the evaluation forms and make recommendations to their respective supervisor who can then choose to independently evaluate products that seem to have merit. This will create more inclusion at all levels and increase employee ownership of any changes in the program.

- The large number of restrooms with ceramic tile floors and walls create buildup along the edges quickly. The use foam build-up cleaners and the corner brush machines that are in the equipment inventory on a weekly or bi-weekly basis would greatly improve the appearance and cleanliness of these areas.
- Facilities has started producing a newsletter that captures the special projects of the month, special event support, information on new hires, and anything else that might be of interest to the campus. Each newsletter could also feature an employee of the month with a photo and personal information on the employee's tenure, family, hobbies, etc. Including the custodians in this would be a good way to integrate them more into the Facilities Department and the Campus. The newsletter could be emailed to all District departments and hard copies provided for custodial staff who wish to share them with family.
- The campus should consider a Custodial Recognition Day. It is understood that there is already a Classified Employee's Recognition process, but one day a year, administrators could schedule an event at night and communicate directly to the custodians that they are valued without it being a campus-wide event. A one day adjustment of shifts could be

discussed with the bargaining unit or other scheduling alternatives could be explored.

- The District should target a re-assessment of the custodial program at an appropriate time interval to measure progress and enable course correction.

# CONCLUSION

## 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.

# Training

## Training

### Recommended Training for Custodial Supervisors

In order to optimize the success of the many changes proposed in this report, it is recommended that the District invest in a series of training classes for the existing Custodial/Receiving Supervisors. The training would be targeted at the following:

- Exploring the findings and recommendations of the Custodial Assessment
- Examining ways to implement the recommendations and Strategic Plan
- Reviewing the roles and responsibilities of a custodial supervisor
- Reviewing the role of custodial services in an academic environment
- Exploring supervisory skills for success in a custodial environment
- Challenges for Custodian Supervisors
- Leadership skills
- Developing a transparent management style
- Proactive Performance Management (Coaching - Mentoring)
- Custodial Technical Leadership Skills
- APPA Custodial Standards - What They Are and How to Use Them
- Use of Custodial Data Systems

The initial recommendation would be to conduct the Custodial Supervisor Training as a group in order to integrate team building objectives. The sessions could also serve to provide indicators of where additional training is needed and what subject matter should be included. One of the primary benefits will be to enable the incumbents to interact in an environment that

they have never had to opportunity to before and to allow the trainer to facilitate the exchange of ideas and to foster a sense of partnership between the supervisors.

#### Recommended Training Curriculum for Lead Custodians

A similar program should be adopted for Lead Custodians to enable them to learn more about their organizational roles and to enable networking between the incumbents. Most current Lead Custodians have minimal interaction with their peers and have had no opportunities for experience sharing. As part of the training, these individuals should have the opportunity to gather as a team to broaden their outlook and optimize the exchange of ideas. In addition to participating in the training for the line custodial staff, the following targeted curriculum should be delivered to the Lead Custodians:

- Roles and responsibilities of a Custodian Supervisor and a Lead Custodian - how they are similar and how they differ
- Leadership skills for non managers
- Basic employee coaching skills
- Basic employee training skills
- How to inspect work and provide constructive input
- Professional development and career paths for Lead Custodians

#### Recommended Training Curriculum for Custodians

The following proposed curriculum is made available as an example of what can and should be provided to the SMC custodial staff on a shift by shift basis. Some training will be prioritized and be recommended for implementation immediately, while other topics can be addressed longer term.



- The Role of a Custodian in Higher Education
  - Definition of a custodian
  - History of custodial services as a profession
  - The role of support services
  - How custodians contribute to the academic mission
  - Consequences of poor custodial services
  - A view of the larger profession of custodial services
  
- The Chemistry of Cleaning
  - How chemicals actually work – why they do or don't work
  - Basic pH and how it impacts cleaning
  - Micro organisms and using disinfectant chemicals
  - Good, bad and inappropriate chemicals
  
- MRSA and the Super Bugs
  - What is MRSA?
  - What are super bacteria?
  - How do we deal with them?
  - What is the custodian's role in public health?
  -
  
- Cleaning of Restrooms and Locker Rooms
  - The science of restroom and locker room cleaning
  - Restroom and locker room chemicals
  - Methods and madness
  - Technology for restroom and locker room cleaning
  - How clean is clean?
  
- Cleaning of Hard Floor Surfaces
  - Floor covering types
  - Tools of the trade
  - Sweeping

- Mopping
- Automated floor cleaning
- What is clean?
- Benefits of good hard floor techniques
  
- Cleaning of Carpeted Floor Surfaces
  - Tools of the trade
  - Different carpet cleaning methods - pros and cons
  - Just how does a vacuum work?
  - Spot and stain removal
  - Periodic cleaning for carpeted floors
  - Restorative cleaning for carpeted floors
  
- Resilient Floor Finishing and Maintenance
  - Types of floor finish
  - What makes floors shine
  - Floor stripping and finishing
  - Interim floor maintenance – polishing
  - Periodic floor maintenance – scrub and recoat
  - Restorative floor finishing – back to square one
  - Before, during and after floor work.
  
- Cleaning Above Floor Surfaces
  - The tools of the trade
  - Differences in how to approach classrooms, office, labs, etc.
  - Dust = custodial enemy number one
  
- Custodial Safety Procedures
  - Asbestos Awareness
  - Chemical Safety Procedures
  - Electrical Safety for Custodians
  - Hazard Communication – Worker Right to Know
  - Lock Out – Tag Out

- Ladder Safety
- Safe Lifting
- Slips and Falls
  
- Time Management for the Custodian
  - Assessing a cleaning station assignment
  - Common errors that waste time
  - Time saving techniques
  - Balancing time against quality – which is more important?
  - Routine, periodic, and project tasks and how to blend them into 8 hours
  
- Custodial Tool and Equipment Care and Maintenance
  - Custodial closets
  - Mops and sweeping tool
  - Chemicals
  - Electrical equipment
  - Safety and personal protective equipment
  
- Quality Control and Custodial Inspections
  - APPA Cleaning Standards = What They Are and What They Mean
  - What does quality control mean for custodians?
  - Why do inspections?
  - Why do forms make a difference?
  - Self inspection
  
- Security and the Position of Trust
  - Security, key control, access control
  - Safeguarding the District's assets
  - Protecting students, faculty and staff
  - Position of trust

- Ethics for the Custodian
  - What are ethics
  - How do ethics apply to a custodian?
  - Examples of custodial ethics challenges
  - How to avoid ethics compromises

