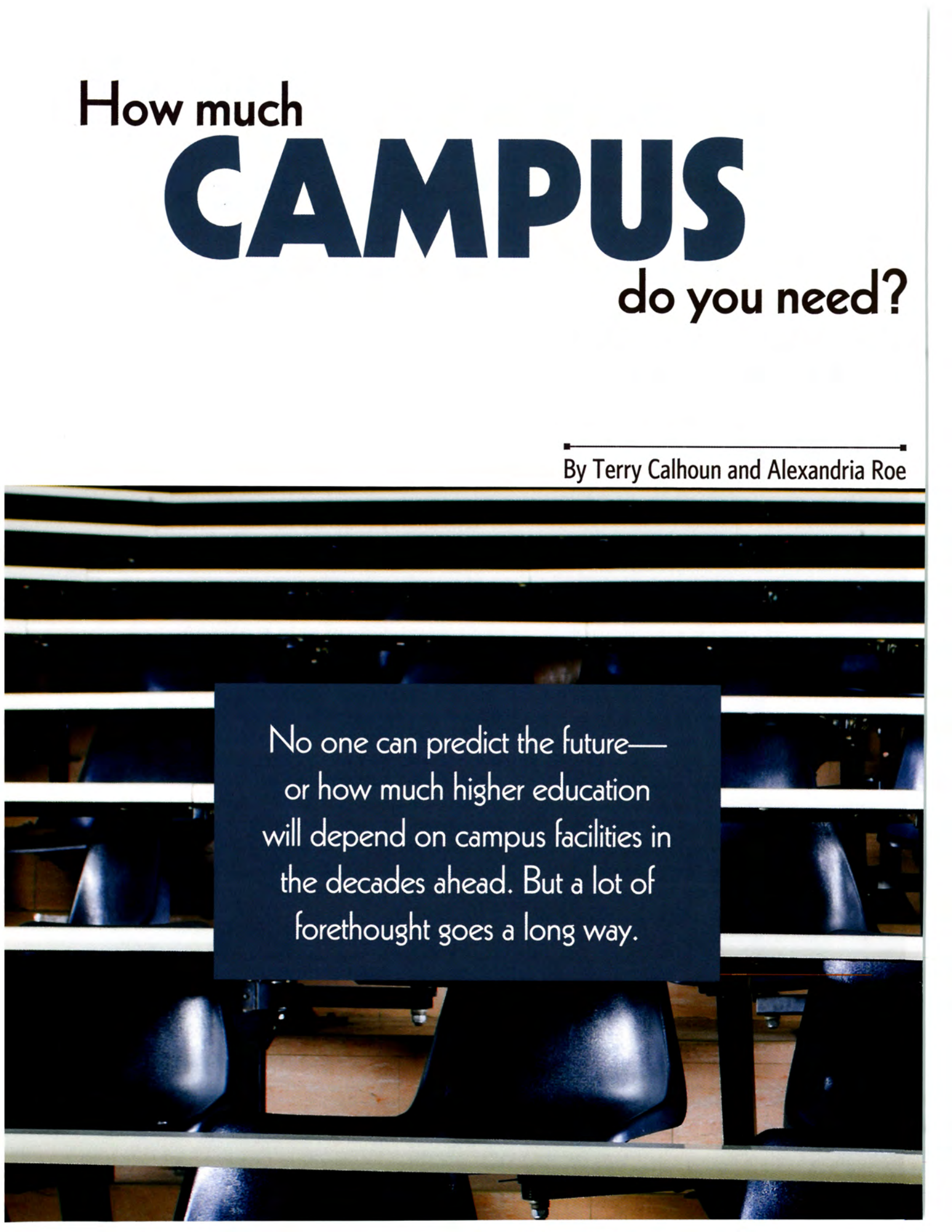


How much

CAMPUS

do you need?

By Terry Calhoun and Alexandria Roe



No one can predict the future—
or how much higher education
will depend on campus facilities in
the decades ahead. But a lot of
forethought goes a long way.

With much of higher education's growth happening online and new dynamics of learning and research shattering centuries-long assumptions, the very nature of higher education seems in flux.

That's true most of all for campus leaders and planners, who must balance demographic projections and other trends they've always used against new and widespread uncertainty about how big swathes of undergraduates will be educated in the decades to come. Who needs expensive new classroom buildings and dorms if future higher education will be delivered mostly digitally to mostly post-traditional students?

On the other hand, underbuilding key facilities might cripple your faculty's ability to perform the research that generates new discoveries and new revenue streams. And failing to keep student-centered facilities updated can spell slow death for a campus's recruiting and endowment efforts.

So how do you plan for the future if you don't know what it looks like? Very carefully.

We put a series of key questions to a dozen experienced planners, asking them to provide practical advice to campus officials about how to plan for an uncertain future. Their responses indicated that college and university leaders must start any planning process by first asking themselves a series of questions.



1 Where is your institution headed?

Given the rapid and substantive flux of higher education in just the last few years, this is not an easy question for any institution's leadership to answer. But space planners, facilities planners, and master planners need to anchor their calculations and counsel with sound strategic and academic planning.

If an institution has up-to-date and aligned strategic and academic plans that are constantly being implemented, the question of where the institution wants to go and how it intends to meet its educational goals should already be answered.

However, according to David Hollowell, Michael F. Middaugh, and Elizabeth Sibolski in their 2006 book *Integrated Higher Education Planning and Assessment: A Practical Guide*, many institutions are troubled during their reaccreditation process by the requirement to confirm that their planning is systematic, rooted in an institution's mission, predicated on analytical and evaluative information, and used for institutional decisions, especially resource allocations.

We understand why: Many institutions lack aligned strategic and academic plans. External space-, facilities-, and master-planning providers often find themselves in the position of first having to bring their client institutions' academic or strategic planning up to a point where it can serve as a useful guide for the master planning or facilities planning process.

Some space planning consultants and architectural firms employ dedicated strategic and academic planning experts for this very purpose, say experts, because plans without direction won't necessarily further an institution's goals.

"Master plans that aren't grounded in a strategic plan—or at least strategic drivers—may end up being a compilation of wishes driven by perceptions, which makes for a shaky planning foundation," said Persis C. Rickes, president of Rickes Associates, Inc., a higher education planning firm. "Strategic plans, in turn, need to be grounded in the real world. For example, simply stating that an enrollment increase is a desirable goal . . . is akin to magical thinking. There is no *there* there."

"If you don't plan, you're not going to go anywhere," agreed Valarie Avalone, director of planning at Monroe Community College (NY). "In these times, with all the plans that are happening with higher education, it's absolutely critical to plan or you're going to get left behind."

That doesn't mean that campuses should set a plan in stone and lock it in a vault. John Knickmeyer, principal at Stantec—a consulting firm that provides planning, engineering, architecture, interior design, project management, and other services—points to community colleges as an exemplar for creating plans that are adaptable to changing circumstances.

"The ability of community colleges to identify and quickly respond to the specific educational needs of their current and future students helps them successfully meet their institutional mission," Knickmeyer said. "[That] is a trait, elevated to a strategy, that should be emulated by their counterparts at the four-year institutions."

Such flexibility should run all the way through a master plan, answering such questions as:

- What is your campus worth, including the built and natural environments?
- What is your campus heritage worth?
- What is it worth with regard to student recruitment and retention?
- How valuable is it for branding, alumni relations, retention, fundraising, and other purposes?
- How much would the real estate be worth via sale or lease, or to borrow against?
- How much deferred maintenance is there?
- Where are there still savings to be had from energy efficiencies?

2 How much campus space—and of what kinds—do you have now, and how are you utilizing the space?

Sally Grans-Korsh, director of facilities management and environmental policy at the National Association of College and University Business Officers, suggests that the first action step many campuses should take is to identify and "mothball" ten percent of instructional space, yielding a number of operating expense savings.

Michael Haggans, visiting scholar at the University of Minnesota School of Architecture, put it even more strongly. “Build no net additional square feet,” said Haggans, who also blogs at campusmatters.net. “Some have tried this, but wavered by creating exceptions for those facilities that are ‘fully self-funded,’” Haggans noted, resulting in gaming of that definition. “My advice is to take the notion of no net additional area as a strategic objective, not a tactical response to fiscal constraints.”

Not everyone would agree with that solution, but all the experts we talked to concurred that a great many institutions have too much space, much of which is both poorly designed for current learning methods and poorly utilized in terms of scheduling and access.

Part of that mismatch comes from institutions' inadequate centralized knowledge about their own campus space. Creating and maintaining a space inventory isn't free, planners said, and it requires confronting the academic community's “turfish” attitude toward space. But without knowing exactly what you've got, it's hard to be able to put it to good use.

There are three broad categories of campus spaces, according to *Research on Learning Space Design: Present State, Future Directions*, a prize-winning 2012 report about space and its effects on learning. The team of institutional and other planners who researched and wrote the report categorize the wide variety of campus spaces as:

- Formal learning spaces, such as classrooms and laboratories;
- Informal learning spaces, such as libraries, group study spaces, and gathering areas; and
- The campus as a whole, including the built and natural environments.

They also identified the following types of formal physical learning spaces:

- Traditional classrooms;
- Lecture halls;
- Technology-infused classrooms;
- Laboratories; and
- Active learning classrooms/next-generation learning spaces.

Being able to classify a campus's square footage by such categories gives campus leaders a solid knowledge base as they look for ways to increase efficiency and plan for the future.

Of course, the rapid integration of technology into higher education has also fundamentally changed the campus-space equation.

“We can't really base our decisions [anymore] on old standard metrics and traditional ways of teaching,” said Sandra Blanchette, director of strategic initiatives at the University of Massachusetts Boston's College of Advancing and Professional Studies.

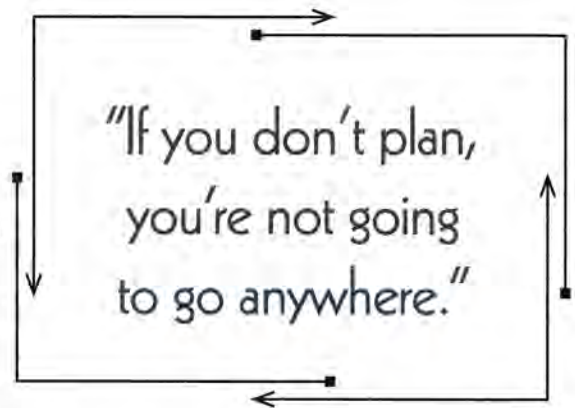
“It's really very clear that in the fairly near future, hybrid teaching is going to be the norm,” added James L. Morrison, professor emeritus of educational leadership at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, citing the infusion of online learning into many brick-and-mortar-based classes. “It's important in that sense for spaces to be amenable to hybrid education.”

Persis Rickes of Rickes & Associates said colleges and universities that are starting to rethink how much campus they need should shift their focal adjustment.

“From the small-picture perspective, space needs have traditionally been guided by concrete multipliers, such as [assignable square feet] . . . or the size of the faculty office,” Rickes said. “Now the focus needs to shift to the big picture, as the metrics no longer tell the entire story.”

What that means in practical terms is being exemplified in a number of collaborative initiatives currently underway. Such projects help planners understand how space options and best practices can be applied to identify not just the physical dimensions of a learning space, but also the audiovisual and IT functionalities within it and the types of pedagogy it is best suited for.

These initiatives include the Learning Spaces Collaboratory, the Learning Space Toolkit, and FLEXspace: Flexible Learning Environments eXchange. The Association of College Unions International has also recently shared useful research on informal learning spaces in its 2012 publication *Physical Place on Campus: A Report on the Summit on Building Community*.



FLEXspace may be the most advanced in terms of inventorying space on multiple dimensions in a way that's useful to both infrastructure planners and academic planners. It has strong support from the Society for College and University Planning; ARTstor, a nonprofit initiative founded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; the Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching (MERLOT); The State University of New York (SUNY) system; The California State University system; Foothill-De Anza Community College District (CA); the EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative; and others.

By the summer of 2014, campus leaders using FLEXspace will be able to plug into its interactive online database of innovative learning spaces. Lisa A. Stephens, senior strategist for academic innovation at the University at Buffalo (NY), and a member of FLEXspace's core team, said the objective is to create an innovative instruction-space repository that also makes use of the field's wide expertise.

"We piloted this solution using a hosted platform from ARTstor with photographs of classrooms, high-end images, and video," she said, referring to the online bank of fine-art images. "The more we thought about it, it was like, 'How can we add even more value to this? What if we add a peer review component to this?'"

3 How much space are you going to need?

Once you know how much space you have and what you want to do with it, a space planner, facilities planner, or master planner can step in, scan the environment, and go through an integrated space planning or master planning process in support of your institutional and academic goals.

As you enter that phase, our experts summarized their advice into a few points:

- Don't waste space: If you build, align with other campus plans and build high-quality, really well-designed space.
- Don't forget that the total square footage of classrooms is likely only a small part of your campus space.
- Classrooms and teaching labs are the most

important pedagogical spaces, but offices are frequently a much larger part of the overall physical facilities budget.

- Master planning should regularly reexamine the planning context, and adjust as needed.
- In the near future, hybrid teaching (combining the best aspects of face-to-face instruction and digital education) will become the norm. Instructional spaces should be amenable to this "new normal."
- Research institutions need to rethink their capital investments and the operating costs of offices, research spaces, and libraries in addition to teaching environments.
- Planning for an uncertain future demands the ability to adapt. A master plan documents a tentative destination. Constant scanning of the environment informs the steps to be taken en route to what is an inherently evolving definition of yet another tentative destination.

Planners working with individual campuses will of course arrive at differing answers to these questions, and will in turn craft customized solutions to address them. But it's inarguable that preparing for fiscal, pedagogical, and technological challenges of the emerging future will require planning that integrates the widest range of institutional concerns, from evolving business models to the efficient use of capital resources.

So, how much campus do you need? Maybe less than you thought, or maybe just a different configuration than you now have. Ultimately, the right campus is the one that best accomplishes its ongoing mission of serving its students, faculty, staff, and community. ■



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