

5 Emerging Responsibilities for Facilities Leaders

The Evolving Role of the Senior Facilities Officer

As budgets tighten and campus needs change, the role of the Senior Facilities Officer (SFO) is evolving—and expanding. Based on interviews with 100+ Facilities Leaders, this infographic highlights the five responsibilities demanding more and more SFO time. It also maps these roles to resources available on eab.com.

The Chief HR Officer

Facilities has always had one of the largest workforces on campus. However, shrinking talent pools, aging staff, and advancing technology have put additional strain on Facilities teams. SFOs therefore must rethink whom to hire and train, as well as how to best deploy and retain their staffs.

Examples

As the Chief HR Officer, some Facilities leaders are using **alternative labor pools**, such as students and custodians, to identify and perform basic maintenance tasks in residence halls and classrooms.

Others are establishing **apprenticeship and upskilling programs** on campus to develop in-house talent for hard-to-fill roles.

A few SFOs are experimenting with **non-management career ladders** to provide opportunities for staff to build expertise without being forced into a supervisory position.

Resources at eab.com

- ▶ Guide to Launching In-House Talent Development Program in Facilities Management
- ▶ Optimizing Outsourcing Arrangements in Facilities

The Blackbelt

Facilities must manage a growing campus footprint and expanding portfolio of spaces with even fewer resources than in the past. Therefore, senior Facilities officers are tackling inefficient processes to eliminate low-value work and free up staff capacity.

Examples

As the Blackbelt, some Facilities leaders are creating **dedicated process improvement units** within the Facilities unit to improve workflows and redeploy resources.

Others are leveraging **new automation opportunities** to transfer simple custodial and maintenance tasks to robots and software systems.

Many SFOs are also revising their **customer satisfaction surveys** to identify services building occupants find unimportant and craft new service-level agreements to prioritize high-impact offerings.

Resources at eab.com

- ▶ Process Improvement Resource Center
- ▶ Shifting the Balance from Reactive to Preventive Maintenance
- ▶ Get the Most Out of Facilities Customer Satisfaction Surveys

The MBA

Campus leaders today expect Facilities to act less like a cost center and more like a business. SFOs, therefore, must embrace an entrepreneurial mindset, pursuing cost-saving strategies and revenue-generating tactics to help fund Facilities initiatives.

Examples

As the MBA, some Facilities leaders are hiring **financial specialists** to provide dedicated business advice and analysis.

Others are exploring **alternative revenue methods** to fund critical activities such as capital renewal.

Quite a few SFOs are also leveraging **public-private partnerships (P3s)** to both secure funding and offload long-term operational risks for various types of capital projects.

Resources at eab.com

- ▶ Capital Renewal Funding Playbook
- ▶ Navigating Public-Private Partnerships

The Spokesperson

Facilities work often occurs behind the scenes, unappreciated by customers. To combat customer misperceptions, SFOs are proactively advocating the value of Facilities by showcasing how their efforts help advance strategic goals.

Examples

As the Spokesperson, some Facilities leaders are developing **smartphone apps** that allow students and staff to identify pressing custodial and maintenance issues and track the progress of their requests.

Others are hiring **dedicated Facilities communication directors** to develop distinctive branding, foster cross-campus relationships, and promote Facilities accomplishments.

Some SFOs are also conducting **Facilities road show presentations** that educate faculty and staff on what Facilities does on campus and why services cost what they do.

Resources at eab.com

- ▶ Facilities Communication Toolkit
- ▶ How to Improve Recognition of Facilities' Contributions to Institutional Goals

The Data Scientist

Presidents and boards have grown vocal in their demand for campus units to make data-driven decisions. This has spurred Facilities leaders to find ways to leverage asset and operational data to understand current performance and identify opportunities for intervention and investment.

Examples

As the Data Scientist, some Facilities leaders are implementing **Facilities management dashboards** to clearly track key performance indicators and improve service delivery.

Others are testing **executive-facing scorecards** to summarize concisely to senior leaders how Facilities is impacting strategic goals.

Many SFOs are also partnering with industry innovators to implement **advanced data sensors** such as occupancy counters and HVAC monitors to enhance their building automation systems with consistent, accurate data.

Resources at eab.com

- ▶ Guide to Building an Impactful Facilities Dashboard
- ▶ How to Create an Executive-Level Facilities Scorecard
- ▶ Enhancing Space Data Collection and Validation