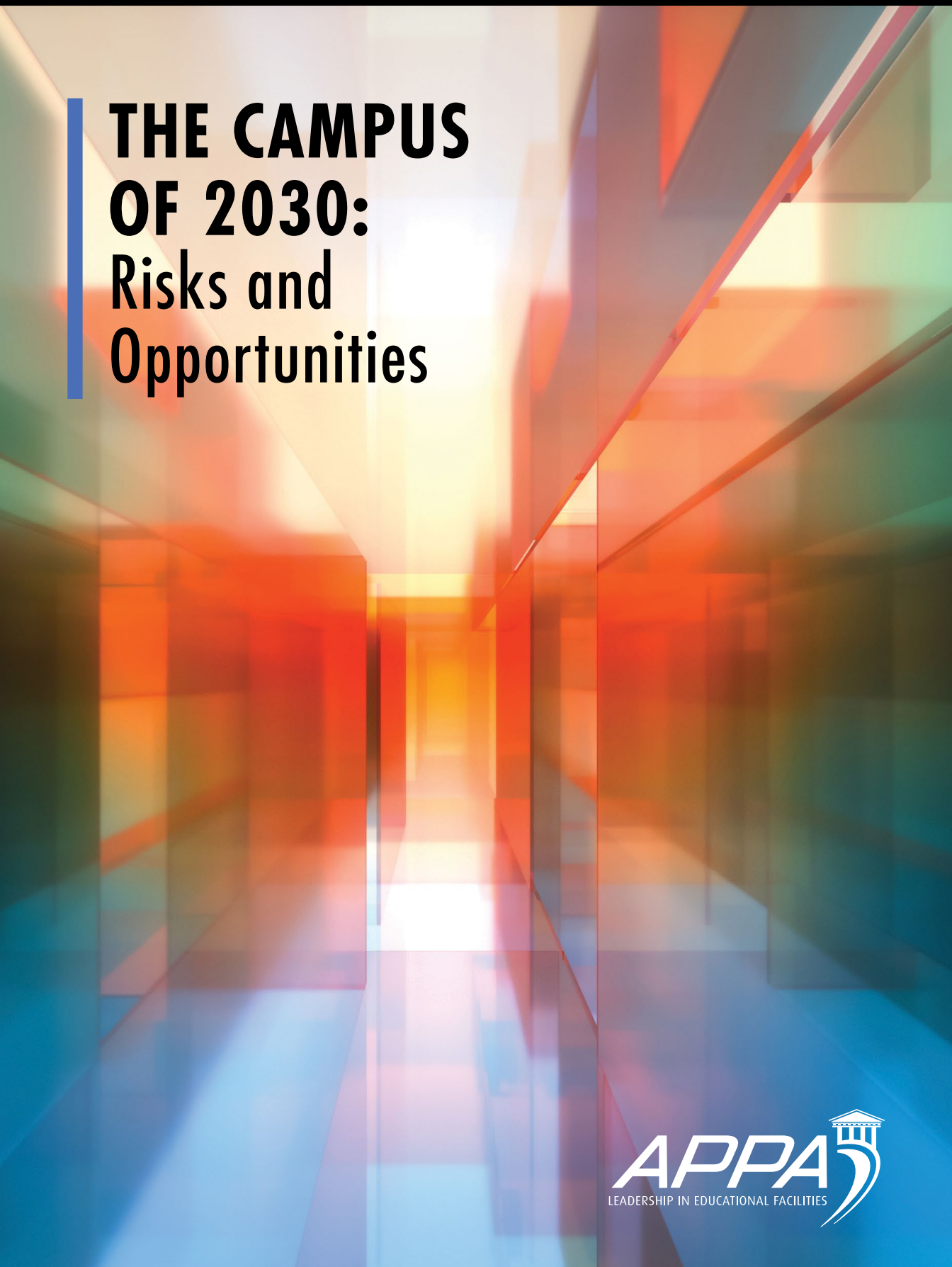
THOUGHT LEADERS SERIES 2024

THE CAMPUS OF 2030: Risks and Opportunities



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Published by:

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Alexandria, Virginia 22314-2818
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www.appa.org/thought-leaders-series

Sponsorship assistance generously provided by:

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International Standard Book Number: 978-1-890956-03-5
Produced in the United States of America

The Campus of 2030: Risks and Opportunities

Section 1:
Executive Summary

Every year, the APPA Thought Leaders Series brings together experts from every corner of the institutional community and across North America to consider major issues facing higher education and how they will shape the built environment of the campus and the facilities management organization. The focus of the 2024 Thought Leaders Symposium was the **Campus of 2030: what it would look like, who would attend, and how it would operate.**

The Campus in 2030.

Thought Leaders participants predicted that by 2030, colleges and universities should anticipate the following:

- Institutions will educate a smaller but more diverse population of students.
- The workforce will also be smaller and more diverse, and therefore require sophisticated technical skills to manage advanced systems.
- Academia will struggle to maintain its reputation and prove its worth.
- Campuses will be fully immersed in digital services. Institutions unable or unwilling to provide such services will not survive.
- Many colleges and universities will fight to survive economic headwinds.

These challenges will make the remaining years of this decade difficult for already stressed faculty and staff. It will not be easy, but the institutions that can marshal their forces and adapt to the new higher education environment will reach 2030 and share the following characteristics:

- **Smart, adaptable, resilient built environments** that use advanced technology to operate and manage space for optimal performance.
- **Streamlined administration and operations teams** that thrive despite financial constraints.
- **Campus facilities optimized to reduce costs and risks** posed by the aging inventory of college and university buildings and infrastructure.
- **Smaller, more diverse workforce**.

Getting from here to there.

Campus leaders have significant barriers to overcome to achieve this vision of 2030. Despite financial constraints and competing demands, institutions can build on the powerful technology already in place, the expertise of both the faculty and staff of the institution, and the clear desire of stakeholders for a smart, adaptable campus. Moving forward, Thought Leaders participants urged their peers to take the following steps:

- **Assess the current state of the built environment.**
- **Manage and optimize campus space to prioritize the long-term financial stability of the institution.**
- **Shape the built environment to support the future of teaching and learning.**
- **Better communicate facilities management's needs, priorities, and opportunities.**
- **Train and educate facilities professionals and leadership to confront new challenges.**

- **Update the facilities master plan to include new priorities, financial limitations, and opportunities.**
- **Create policies and processes to govern the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and other advanced technologies.**
- **Commit to a culture of innovation within the facilities organization.**

Higher education is always in the process of transformation, and the rate of change has accelerated dramatically over the previous decade. One welcome consequence of the current climate is that more attention is paid to campus facilities than ever before. College and university leaders better understand the value of the **built environment as it relates** to student success and long-term financial stability. Facilities leaders have an opportunity to help their institutions actualize the potential of the built environment to serve the students of 2030 and beyond.

Section 2: *Introduction*

For 18 years, the APPA Thought Leaders Series has gathered experts from various stakeholders of the educational community and asked them to consider an important topic. In addition to tapping facilities leaders and staff, we drew on the wisdom of leaders in operations, finance and budgeting, student affairs, technology, and academics. We've tackled issues including diversity and inclusion, the changing workforce, the student of the future, and risk management.

In 2024, we took a new approach. **This year, participants focused on the college or university of 2030: what it will look like, who will attend, and how it will operate.** With our eyes on the future, we decided to turn to the rising generation of higher education leaders for their insights—since they will lead the institution in 2030. We assembled a cohort of mid-career professionals from academic affairs, financial services, student services, planning, human resources, diversity and inclusion, athletics, and, of course, facilities management.

We asked these professionals to envision the college or university of 2030, and here's what they pictured:

- Institutions educating a smaller but more diverse group of students.
- A lean, highly skilled workforce supported by advanced technology.
- An industry struggling to regain its reputation and prove its worth.
- Campuses that are fully immersed in digital services.
- Built environments where space is managed for maximum efficiency.
- Many colleges and universities fighting to remain financially sustainable.

It's a picture that is not without shadows, but overall, Thought Leaders participants were optimistic about the future of higher education. Technology is one bright spot. The digital transformation of higher education, including the rise of generative artificial intelligence (AI) such as ChatGPT, has the potential to allow fewer employees to do more with less while offering insights that will help reduce costs and improve efficiency. The adoption of best practices for space management and planning is another positive. Colleges and universities are realizing both the cost and the potential of their space; they are taking seriously the total cost of ownership of their buildings and the need to maximize space utilization.

For the institution as a whole and the facilities organization in particular, it will take hard work to get to this future; in particular:

- Campuses must manage the digital transformation and develop policies and processes to ensure the safe ethical use of AI.
- Facilities leaders must help their institutions right-size the campus, improve the management of space, better support teaching and learning, and align their strategic and master plans.
- Facilities departments must work internally to prepare their workforce for new challenges, better communicate their plans and successes, and foster a culture of innovation prepared to tackle whatever the future brings.

In looking for a theme for this report, an interesting concept that originated among academic librarians came to mind: **space as a service**. An EDUCAUSE article explains it like this:

> The gist of this new take on the library's **physical space as a service in and of itself** is that undergraduate and graduate students increasingly want to **leverage library space to enhance their overall educational experience**. In the past, academic librarians' perception of building space was static and nondynamic: the space was simply the sum total of all the chairs, tables, rooms, and equipment that the inhabitants of the space could occupy or use. All the activities that happened within the library building … were identified as "the real services." Yet in an academic environment that is shifting to hybrid learning modes, librarians must reimagine **their space as a service delivered to students**, even when those librarians may themselves have less presence in the space. *(Emphasis added.)*

Libraries have employed this concept to evaluate the needs of their students, including non-traditional uses, and to develop creative ways to provide those services through library space.

This concept can be expanded to encompass the entire institution. In the past, the campus was a fixed backdrop to the real action of the college or university. Today, we increasingly recognize that the built environment plays a critical role in multiple aspects of higher education. Learning is not restricted to the classroom or lab, and the entire campus supports the mission of the institution. **Space is as much a service as admissions, student affairs, or financial aid.** At its best, the campus provides the following:

- Active learning classrooms that support contemporary pedagogy.
- Cutting-edge laboratories that enable scientific discovery.
- Welcoming residence halls, student unions, and dining facilities that facilitate student engagement and connection.
- Informal spaces that prompt creative interaction.
- Student-centered administrative hubs that streamline service delivery.
- Iconic campus landmarks that foster a sense of community.

In library science, the new approach requires librarians to question "the viability of every existing space and whether it fits into the new space-as-a-service paradigm," according to EDUCAUSE. Similarly, colleges and universities must assess *their* space. Institutions have many tools to analyze space quantitatively—by energy costs, replacement costs, utilization, etc.—but one qualitative measure should perhaps be the most important: *is this space fulfilling a needed service?* Because if the answer is *no*—or even if the answer is *yes, more or less,* or *yes, barely*—facilities professionals must ask if that space as it currently exists provides value to the institutional mission.

The goal for higher education facilities professionals in 2030 is to provide **space as a service to the entire institution**—a space that is engaging, welcoming, flexible, interactive, efficient to operate and maintain, entirely digitally integrated, and resilient. With the campus itself a service to the college or university community, institutions will be positioned for success in 2030 and beyond.