

## **Campus facilities management: Rethinking campus space planning to better meet post-COVID needs**

Spurred on by the pandemic, Managers of Learning Environments and Technology have had to think on their feet when adapting how they operate. First and foremost, providing a safe and healthy environment for educational activities has become paramount.

But it goes beyond future pandemic prevention; students expect more from their place of learning than ever before. A campus that embraces new systems and technologies to facilitate different personalities and hybrid learning styles.

These changes and technologies are transforming campus that are less rigid in their purpose, facilitating more flexibility to not only students, but allowing educational institutions to pivot and expand their offerings. Here's a quick run through of the latest trends and developments we are seeing in the further and higher education spheres:

### **A hybrid approach works best**

Empty campuses have given an opportunity to rapidly develop digital and online teaching and delivery. However, at the same time it has highlighted the necessity to still maintain a physical campus. According to a report by Office for Students, over half of students surveyed said their learning was “impacted by slow or unreliable internet connection,” with as much as 8% severely affected. Furthermore, 71% mentioned a “lack of access to a quiet study space, with 22% ‘severely’ impacted.” It is clear that many students cannot access the learning space they need.

### **Upgrading cleaning protocols**

Campuses have really had to up their game when it comes to keep spaces clean and healthy. Immediately sanitizing a space once it is no longer in use (such as a classroom once a seminar is finished), is not always feasible. Therefore, room access solutions — while previously used for security purposes — are now being used as tools to secure spaces and keep them vacant until they can be suitably cleaned and sterilized, before the next activity kicks off in that space.

### **Upgrading the campus experience and offerings to entice more students**

Educational institutions are beginning to return to some level of normality. However, dropping enrollment rates and growing costs stand in the way of an economically viable and safe return. To entice students back, campus will have to evolve, and this undeniably means a greater roll

out of technology and IoT to champion an enhanced learning environment, while also ensuring a safe and healthy place to learn.

With students now adjusted to off-campus learning, educational institutions will have to better consider the physical layout of the campus — study spaces, classrooms, event spaces, classes with specialized equipment — and adapt it in a way that suits the needs of students who expect flexibility.

### **And enables institutions to explore new revenue streams.**

Education institutions are having to pivot. What does that look like though? The State University of New York has discussed offering alternative course delivery, or more opportunities outside the standard 16-week semesters to attract non-traditional students or embrace professionals looking to augment and expand their skills sets. It can extend even beyond that, repurposing space for more business-related activities, such as on-campus business start-up and business incubators.

### **Wrap up**

Much like the workplace, educational institutions are having to reevaluate space and its purpose. Campuses and their FMs have a lot on their plate! Not only must they juggle a campus that promotes the health and safety of students, but offering the spaces the students need (and in the right measures).



### **Areas of key concern:**

- **Strategic deployment of the right tech and IoT to ensure a protected environment for sustainable campus health and safety.**
- **Space planning will take a bigger role in deciding facility offerings to entice students, and ensuring that it is flexible so they can access what they need, when they need it.**
- **Adapting space to meet the needs of a big variety of economic activities, while increasing utilization.**