

SHOP TALK

From the Physical Plant Division of the University of Florida
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Mission Statement:

We create and maintain facilities for the university community.

UF Physical Plant Honored With 2005 APPA Award For Excellence

Physical Plant Division is very pleased to announce that thanks to our hard work and dedication, we have been chosen to



APPA's Site Visit Committee (seated, left to right): Dave Button, Greg Fichter, and Joe Rubertone.

PPD's Award Committee (standing, left to right): Mark Ivanowski, Donna Agerton, Pam Walker, Fred Gratto, Allan Preston, and Bob Bell. (not pictured: Harold Barrand).

receive the 2005 Award for Excellence in Facilities Management from the Association of Higher Education Facilities Officers (also known as APPA). APPA is a worldwide organization of physical plant administrators and employees, dedicated to the "maintenance, protection and promotion of quality educational facilities". The Award for Excellence is the highest institutional honor APPA can bestow, and provides opportunities for national and international recognition for outstanding facilities management.

"This award is something that (former PPD Quality Office Coordinator) Jean Sweitzer and I had outlined as one of our eventual goals back when the Quality Department was first created at PPD, about 10 years ago," said UF PPD Director Dave O'Brien. "In 2005 I felt we had achieved the necessary goals to be recognized as a top-tier organization."

"These awards are modeled after the Florida Sterling Awards, or the National Baldrige Awards," said Sweitzer. "The application guidelines are very specific, with sections dealing with leadership, strategic and operational planning, customer satisfaction, information and analysis, develop-

ment/management of human resources, process management, performance results, and miscellaneous details of your organization."

Sweitzer and Pam Walker, Administrative Assistant to the Director, put together an award committee consisting of PPD's Donna Agerton, Mark Ivanowski, Fred Gratto, Allan Preston, Bob Bell, and Harold Barrand. With Walker serving as committee chair, they compiled a 35-page application documenting PPD's processes and results for presentation to the APPA Professional Affairs Committee. This document was the first part of the application for the Award of Excellence. If successful, UF PPD would be considered for an on-site review as a follow-up of the written application.

"The entire Award application was documentation of all the hard work our service partners do each and every day," said Preston, current Quality Office Coordinator. "Each Committee Member would write our section and then Pam Walker edited the final product. Pam was instrumental in keeping us all on track and merging all our bits and pieces into a professional document."

"We were all pretty confident when we submitted our application," said Gratto. "This was an enormous undertaking, but we were confident that we had done all the necessary work to show that UF PPD was deserving of such an award."

Greg Fichter, Assistant Director of Building Services at Indiana University Bloomington, and member of the Professional Affairs Committee, said, "The committee consists of seven members who represent each region of our organization. Each member reviews and scores the application individually, and then the committee meets as a group to discuss their scores and come to a consensus opinion. It takes quite a bit of energy and effort for a university to reach a level where you would even consider sending in an application; all our criteria must be met in full and all issues must be addressed thoroughly in order to be selected for this award. If even a few of the issues we look at are not fully documented, we have to deny the applications. It was the opinion of our committee that UF Physical Plant had met all criteria satisfactorily, in writing, and our next step was to schedule an actual visit to the campus to verify that all the information submitted was, in fact, true and correct."

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Student Design And PPD Labor Create New Courtyard

When last year's hurricanes caused damage to the 600-square foot courtyard just south of the University Gallery in the Fine Arts complex, Dr. Amy Vigilante, Director of the University Galleries, decided that this would be a perfect opportunity to have the area thoroughly renovated.

"There had been a big tree uprooted and just a lot of damage done," she said. "I had felt that that area could use some design upgrades for a while, and so after the hurricane damage, I spoke with a friend of mine from the Landscape Architecture Dept., Tina Gurucharri, and she suggested that I get in touch with Dr. Robert Grist at Landscape Architecture, that perhaps his students could come up with some design ideas and suggestions."



PPD Grounds shaped and poured custom paving stones for the project.



The project features native foliage, three types and colors of gravel stone, and stylish wood benches.

However, as Vigilante was making plans for the courtyard, Physical Plant had already designated the area as needing work. L a n d s k e e p i n g / Groundskeeping Superintendent Marty Werts said,

"(Assistant Director of Grounds) Fred Gratto and I had identified that area as one that had sustained hurricane damage, and we sent a crew over to begin working on renovations."

Vigilante continued, "I came out the next day and PPD was already there! They had a crew in the courtyard, digging out the old foliage. So I asked them about getting involved with the design aspect of the courtyard and from there I was introduced to Marty Werts. I explained to Marty what I had in mind for an approach to the design process, and he was very supportive."

Werts and Vigilante contacted Grist about soliciting design ideas for the courtyard from his students. Grist said, "Every spring I teach a planting design studio, and this seemed like a great opportunity for the class to get some real-world experience with landscape architecture. We decided to turn it into a contest, with each student submitting an entry and then Marty, Amy and myself would judge them and decide on a winner."

Grist and Werts laid out guidelines for the project, and then the 26 students drew up individual plans for the space. "We had a clump of sago palms, and a large queen palm tree, that were already in the space and that we planned to keep," said Werts. "The students had to incorporate those existing trees into their designs. Also, I wanted the designs to use drought-resistant plants, since there is no irrigation in the courtyard."

The winning design was submitted by third-year student David Heffelfinger. Werts said, "There were some really intriguing designs entered in this contest. However, we had to pick the one that was best for a real-world application. The winning design was aesthetically very pleasing, as well as being the most functional of the entries."

Grist added, "David's design is beautiful in its simplicity – it has sort of a Zen-like quality to it, and it utilized the existing plant structure very well."

Heffelfinger's design incorporated triple-trunk Robellini palms, a pair of concrete pedestals on which to display sculptures, and rectangular paving stones laid in a symmetrical pattern, forming a path through the courtyard. PPD Grounds had to custom-form and pour the paving stones on-site, since the irregular sizes were not available through vendors. Grounds also installed a pair of custom wood benches for seating. The existing sago and queen palms were integrated into the design, and coonties, a native, fern-like perennial, were used to fill out the foliage around the palms. Finally, three types of decorative colored gravel were added to the area, with the colors chosen by Vigilante and her employees.

"This was just a really fun project to be involved with," said Vigilante. "PPD was extremely helpful throughout, and the courtyard is a wonderful addition to our space at the University Galleries. It's so inviting, and it's changed the social structure of our openings and exhibits – people love to just hang out outside and talk in that space, and I think that's wonderful because it facilitates traffic between our two galleries."



The finished courtyard, viewed from the northeast corner.

Elevator Renovation At Health Science Center

The Health Science Center arm of UF PPD has recently finished an upgrade project on three elevators in the south tower of the Dental Building. The elevators' old paint and flooring was cracked, chipped and dirty and the decision was made that they needed renovation.



Top: The old walls and flooring were battered and chipped.

Bottom: A new, scratch-resistant wood-look floor was installed.

The old wall panels within the elevator were removed and wrapped with stainless steel for better protection and cosmetic enhancement. Meanwhile, the original VCT flooring was pulled up and a beautiful new woodgrain-look floor was laid inside the elevators.

Maintenance Superintendent Jim Thompson said, "The original flooring was a material called VCT, and that has to be stripped and waxed regularly. The new floor product is nearly maintenance free, and guaranteed to last for 10 years. And as a bonus, it looks pretty sharp, too."

Thompson said that PPD originally planned to paint the walls, and the Dental Dept. chose black as the new wall color. However, after the first elevator was finished and had been in use for a few days, the crew noticed that the paint wasn't holding up very well.

"The paint was just getting gouged and chipped too much in a high-traffic application like the elevators," said Thompson. "So what we did was cut sheets of black laminate to fit the walls, and we installed those in place of re-painting."

Members of the HSC Physical Plant who worked on this project included Harley Ingle, Charlie Seroki and Ben Werts, who removed the original paint on the walls. Marvin Davis and Jerry Cooksley removed the original wall panels and VCT, and wrapped the panels with stainless steel. Finally, Dan Crenshaw and Walter "Pete" Bradley installed the black laminate sections and the re-wrapped wall panels.



Black laminate panelling was installed over the old paint, and the existing decorative wall panels and railings were wrapped with stainless steel.

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After review of our application, UF Physical Plant was chosen to receive an on-site visit, which was scheduled for May 3, 2005. PPD Application Committee Chair Pam Walker said, "Everyone on the committee was thrilled when we learned that the APPA representatives would be coming to Gainesville to review our programs. There was a lot of work involved to get ready for the visit. We had to provide written documentation of our goals and programs. Dolly Warner, Program Assistant in Operations, and I put together several bound notebooks with pictures and examples of work performed, training provided and awards received, including our community service programs. This was a great experience for me and I learned so much about PPD. We're such a large organization that it's hard to really know everything that goes on, but I feel much better informed now."

During the site visit, APPA officials (Fichter, Joe Rubertone, Director of Facilities at Quinnipiac University, and Dave Button, PPD Director at Regina University, Canada) met with PPD's award team to review documents and further inform themselves of PPD's policies and procedures; had lunch with PPD's Executive Council, and UF Vice President of Finance and Administration Ed Poppell; and took a van tour of the UF campus with Dave O'Brien. Finally, they spoke with several prominent PPD customers to get a better impression of the level of customer service provided by UF PPD.

Rubertone said, "The on-site visit is primarily used to be able to view actual documents and records which verify that everything in the original application is factual. We were all very favorably impressed with UF Physical Plant. The organization's policies and resources were well-documented, and the grounds and buildings are very well-maintained."

Fichter said, "This is a very prestigious award, and UF's Physical Plant should be very proud to be selected as a recipient. We found a very good operation on our visit, with good key people, and a very positive, pro-active group of employees. You have an impressive, well-maintained campus, and obviously have a workforce that cares about the quality of their work, and who have put in a lot of time and done a great job in meeting all of APPA's criteria. UF Physical Plant is extremely deserving of the APPA Award of Excellence."



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UF Football, Students And PPD Team Up To Plant Trees

The University of Florida’s new head football coach, Urban Meyer, has a strong philosophy of building good relationships between his athletes and the campus student body. Recently, Physical Plant Division became a big part of Coach Meyer’s plans to promote goodwill, by helping coordinate a day of tree-planting in the southwest area of campus.



2-Time National Coach of the Year Urban Meyer also wields a mean shovel.

“I was contacted by Myra Morgan, Associate Director at the Reitz Union, about an idea that Coach Meyer had developed,” said Fred Gratto, Assistant Director of Physical Plant. “The idea was for the losing team in the Orange and Blue spring football game to spend the following Saturday doing some kind of campus beautification project, and they were wondering if we had any suggestions for something that could occupy about 60 football players for a while. I mentioned the idea of planting trees on campus, and Coach Meyer really liked that suggestion so we started working out the details.”

Gratto began working with Orange and Blue Cabinet Director for Student Government Gary Goldberg to iron out the details and organize student participation. As the project developed, the number of students involved jumped from 60 to several hundred. McGuire Village, Radio Road, and Bledsoe Road were selected as suitable locations for planting. Physical Plant donated 385 trees to the project, including crepe myrtles, bald cypresses, chestnut oaks, pond pines and swamp dogwoods. “We wanted to use crepe myrtles along the roadsides,” said Gratto. “The other trees were planted in or near retention ponds and other appropriate areas.”

The event, dubbed the Inaugural Orange and Blue Campus Beautification Project, kicked off on the morning of April 16. Participants included Coach Meyer and most of the Gator football team rather than just the losing squad from the spring game, UF athletic director Jeremy Foley, assistant coaches Charlie Strong and Chuck Heater, Physical Plant staff, and more than 300 fraternity members, students, and football players.

“The cooperation that we received from Physical Plant was just incredible,” said Goldberg. “Their staff was extremely enthusiastic and Dr. Gratto was a great help – we couldn’t have pulled this off without his expertise and assistance. I can’t say enough good things about the project and PPD’s help, just a superb effort by everyone involved.”

“This was a well coordinated event,” said Gratto. “It’s something that everybody involved in can be proud of for years to come. When the students and football players visit campus they can see the fruits of their labor and feel good about their contribution to making this campus a better place. The excellent cooperation between Physical Plant, the football team, athletic department, Student Government, and the fraternities contributed to our success. Coach Meyer mentioned that he’d like to make this an annual event, and that’s a nice idea so Physical Plant will be able to shine on campus again next spring.”

PPD staff who contributed to the project included Charles Hall, James Graham, Curtis Mann, Steve Corbitt, John Black, Jeremy Joiner, Steve Tompkins, Larry Peoples, Darwin Hall, Kenneth Williams, Roman Abadia, Kenny Kruger, Bruce Robinson, Wayne Carawan, and Fred Gratto.



Players, students and staff get ready for some tree-planting.