

TOUGH TIMES

M&O spending as a percentage of total budget dropped slightly as difficult economic conditions continue to affect colleges.

By Joe Agron

Difficult economic conditions continue to be a drag on college budgets, and contributed to institutions cutting back on the percentage spent on maintaining and operating their facilities.

Spending on maintenance and operations (M&O) as a percentage of total college budget dropped to 9.5 percent (from 10 percent last year) according to *American School & University's* 10th annual College

Maintenance and Operations Cost Study. The decrease in percentage spending came even as energy and utilities costs skyrocketed.

Behind the study

In October, physical plant directors at two-year colleges and four-year institutions with no significant graduate programs were mailed a detailed questionnaire asking them to document

various M&O costs for the 2003-04 school year.

The survey specifically targets two-year colleges and four-year institutions with no significant graduate programs in order to provide useful comparative data. No universities were included in this research. Larger four-year universities with significant graduate programs are not surveyed because their costs and activities typically are so varied that results would

Table 1

Maintenance & Operations Costs

(Expressed in *median* dollars per FTE student)

	All Colleges	%	Two-Year	%	Four-Year	%
Salaries	\$405.63	44%	\$288.19	48%	\$723.11	41%
Benefits (based on full-time only)	\$100.42	11%	\$78.57	13%	\$168.93	10%
Total Utilities	\$336.21	37%	\$190.38	32%	\$711.14	40%
Gas**	\$74.94		\$37.13		\$179.09	
Electricity**	\$187.51		\$136.81		\$294.12	
Gas & Electricity (subtotal)	\$267.89		\$162.50		\$479.02	
Other Utilities**	\$53.57		\$22.80		\$129.95	
Total Equipment & Supplies	\$62.90	7%	\$38.62	6%	\$138.32	8%
Custodial/Maint. Equip. & Supplies**	\$46.42		\$24.33		\$78.14	
Grounds Equip. & Supplies**	\$19.16		\$7.87		\$41.44	
Vehicle Maintenance	\$12.24	1%	\$4.91	1%	\$20.14	1%
Total M&O Budget*	\$917.40	100%	\$600.67	100%	\$1,761.64	100%
% M&O of Total College Budget	9.5%		9.0%		10.0%	

*Calculated from subtotals (in blue).

**Based on fewer responses than the total due to schools that combine some of these categories.

Table 2
Maintenance & Operations Costs
 (Expressed in *median* dollars per square foot)

	All Colleges	Two-Year	Four-Year
Salaries	\$1.89	\$2.25	\$1.59
Benefits (based on full-time only)	\$0.46	\$0.58	\$0.39
Total Utilities	\$1.65	\$1.73	\$1.51
Gas**	\$0.38	\$0.28	\$0.47
Electricity**	\$0.90	\$1.12	\$0.66
<i>Gas & Electricity (subtotal)</i>	<i>\$1.24</i>	<i>\$1.49</i>	<i>\$1.10</i>
Other Utilities**	\$0.21	\$0.20	\$0.22
Total Equipment & Supplies	\$0.28	\$0.29	\$0.27
Custodial/Maint. Equip. & Supplies**	\$0.20	\$0.21	\$0.16
Grounds Equip. & Supplies**	\$0.08	\$0.07	\$0.09
Vehicle Maintenance	\$0.05	\$0.04	\$0.05
Total M&O Budget*	\$4.33	\$4.89	\$3.81
Sq. ft. of bldg. maint. per FTE student	207	128	462

*Calculated from subtotals (in blue).
 **Based on fewer responses than the total due to schools that combine some of these categories.

be less useful.

The tables and charts that follow—which detail M&O expenditures at two-year, four-year and all colleges—identify median expenditures for M&O per full-time-equivalent (FTE) student and per square foot, as well as the incidence of various maintenance practices.

Table 1 outlines median M&O expenditures per FTE student for such categories as salaries, benefits, gas, electricity, other utilities, maintenance and grounds equipment and supplies, vehicle maintenance and total M&O, and identifies the percentage of total budget colleges allocate to M&O.

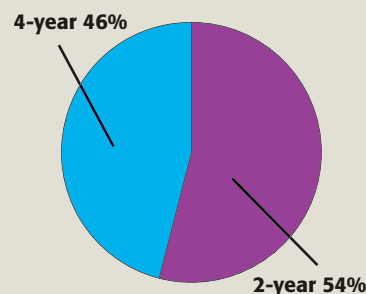
The most significant finding is that two-year colleges posted a significant drop in the percentage of total budget allocated to M&O this year over the previous year (9 percent compared with 12 per-

Table 3
Median M&O salaries
 (Full-time employees)

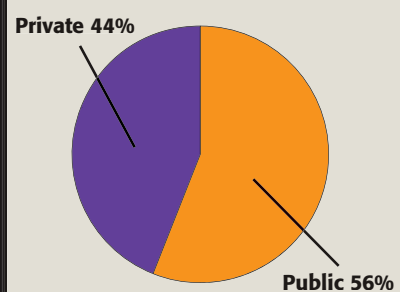
Function	Two-Year	Four-Year	All Colleges
Administrative	\$53,700	\$45,700	\$50,000
Custodial	\$22,667	\$20,174	\$21,013
Engineer/Architect	\$56,250	\$67,686	\$62,575
Grounds	\$27,572	\$26,544	\$27,204
Maintenance	\$34,196	\$30,000	\$32,398
Secretarial/Clerical	\$27,299	\$24,884	\$26,400
Motor Pool	\$30,000	\$30,468	\$30,000
Security	\$28,165	\$24,499	\$27,462

When it comes to contracting out M&O services, 25 percent of all colleges, 19 percent of two-year and 32 percent of four-year institutions do.

Type of institution
 (responding to survey)

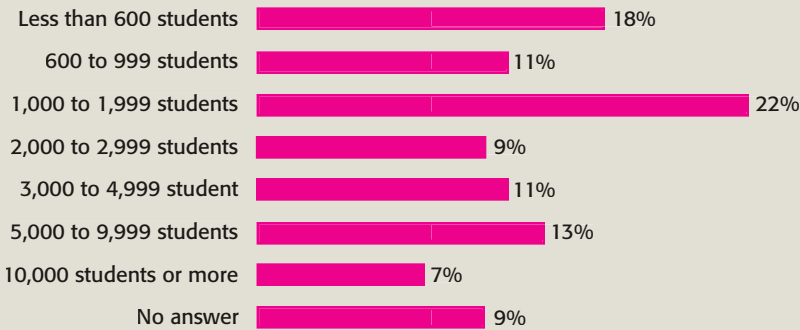


Type of institution
 (of survey respondents)



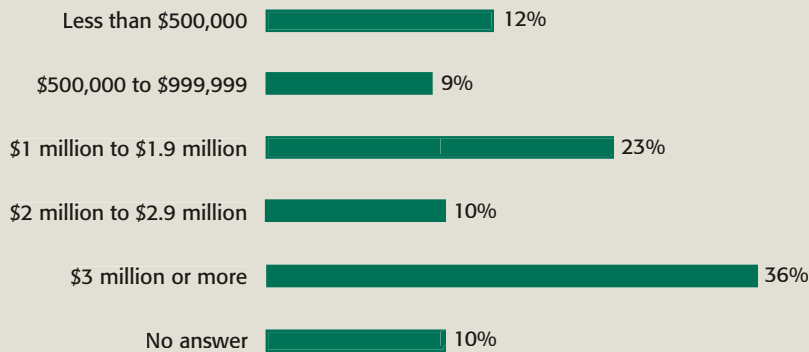
FTE enrollment

(of responding institutions)



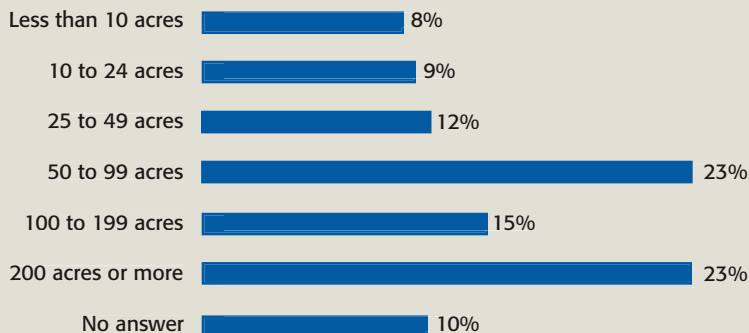
M&O budget

(of survey respondents)



Total grounds acreage maintained

(by survey respondents)



Colleges typically add 25.5 percent to all base salaries in the form of fringe benefits.

cent). Two-year institutions also spend a larger percentage of their M&O dollars on salaries (48 percent compared with 41 percent at four-year institutions).

In addition, energy and utilities costs per student and per square foot significantly increased. For all colleges, the median cost per student for total utilities skyrocketed 35 percent over the year before; the median cost per square foot jumped 15 percent.

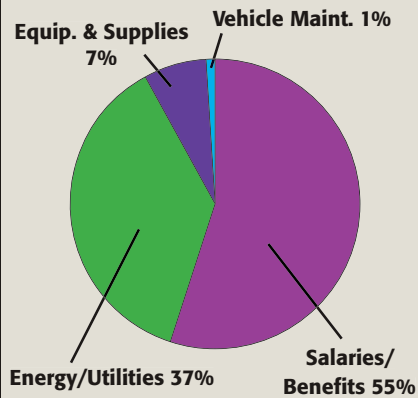
Table 2 details median M&O expenditures per square foot of building maintained. As has been noted in past studies, square feet of building maintained per FTE student varies significantly among four-year and two-year colleges. Four-year institutions maintain almost four times the amount of building space than two-year colleges (462 square feet per student compared with 128 square feet per student at two-year colleges). The median college maintains 207 square feet per student.

Table 3 lists salary data for a variety of M&O job functions at two-year, four-year and all colleges. Among the titles surveyed:

•**Administrative:** Those individuals who have managerial or supervisory duties

How the M&O budget is split

(median dollars per FTE student)



Square feet of building maintained per FTE student

All Colleges



Two-Year



Four-Year



(does not include the overall director of physical plant).

- Custodial:** Those individuals responsible for building upkeep and cleaning.

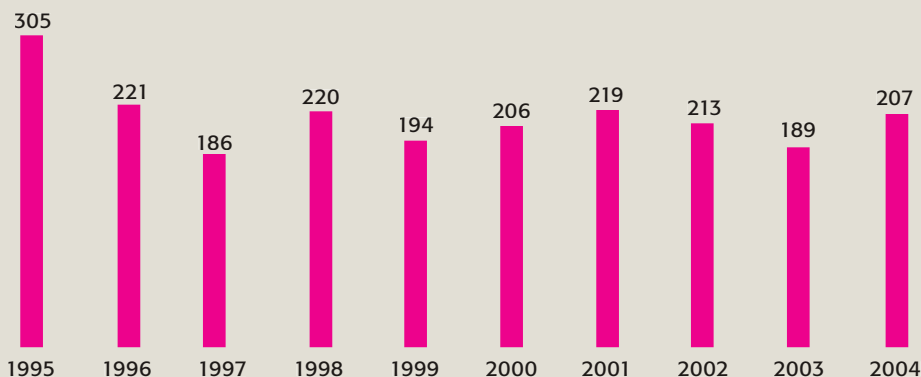
- Engineer/Architect:** Those in-house positions responsible for planning, design and specialized facilities duties.

- Grounds:** Those individuals responsible for landscape maintenance and upkeep.

- Maintenance:** Those individuals who perform skilled

Keeping it clean

The amount of square feet of building maintained per full-time-equivalent (FTE) student at colleges over the past decade (in median square feet):



It's in the details

Following are medians by institution type:

Category	All Colleges	Two-Year	Four-Year
Sq. ft. of bldg. maintained per student	207	128	462
Sq. ft. maintained per custodial employee	33,429	30,414	38,182
Sq. ft. maintained per maintenance employee	68,954	63,257	72,222
Acres maintained per grounds employee	27	35	18
Total reported 2003-04 M&O Budget	\$2.10 million	\$2.10 million	\$2.14 million

Number of buildings at institution

1 building	2%
2 to 5 buildings	12%
6 to 10 buildings	18%
11 to 20 buildings	26%
More than 20 buildings	40%
No answer	2%

Total gross area maintained of all buildings

(including corridors and other common and office areas) by responding institutions

Less than 100,000 sq. ft.	9%
100,000 to 199,999 sq. ft.	10%
200,000 to 299,999 sq. ft.	11%
300,000 to 399,999 sq. ft.	8%
400,000 to 499,999 sq. ft.	10%
500,000 to 749,999 sq. ft.	18%
750,000 sq. ft. or more	21%
No answer	13%

jobs, such as plumbing, electrical or HVAC repair.

•**Motor Pool:** Those individuals involved with transportation operations.

•**Secretarial/Clerical:** Those in-

dividuals who perform secretarial duties.

•**Security:** Those individuals responsible for safety of buildings and equipment. Does not include professional security or law-enforcement officials, if employed by the college.

Among additional highlights of this year's survey:

•The amount of square feet maintained per custodian increased rather significantly from last year, totaling 33,429 at all colleges (30,306 square feet last year). At two-year colleges, the number of square feet maintained per custodian was 30,414; at four-year institutions it was 38,182.

•Square feet maintained per maintenance worker jumped this year to 68,954 compared with 64,248 last year.

•The number of acres maintained per grounds employee also increased this year to 27 compared with 24 last

year.

•The median total utilities cost for all colleges is \$654,000; the median annual vehicle maintenance cost is \$14,000 per institution.

•Engineers and architects receive the highest median salaries at colleges, but only 15 percent of institutions reported having one on staff.

•Colleges typically add 25.5 percent to all base salaries in the form of fringe benefits.

•The median number of buildings on a two-year college campus is 15; the median number of buildings on a four-year campus is 19.

•When it comes to contracting out M&O services, 25 percent of all colleges, 19 percent of two-year and 32 percent of four-year institutions do. ■

Agron, editor-in-chief, can be reached at jagron@primediabusiness.com.