

## Standard Eight: Physical and Technological Resources

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### Description

#### *Physical Resources*

The Urban College of Boston shares a ten-story building at 178 Tremont Street in the heart of downtown Boston and in a historically significant area near the Freedom Trail. The College is located directly across the street from the Boston Common, between the central Downtown Crossing shopping area and the theatre district and is located in close proximity to Emerson College and Suffolk University. This well-located site provides students the opportunity to study in the heart of the cultural center of the city.

Urban College's central location and use of this space evolved from and supports, the strategy of the College since its inception almost 40 years ago as a training program, the Urban College Program, founded by ABCD, to provide job training, as well as career development and educational opportunities for residents living in the urban core of Boston. Not only does this location fit the mission of the College, but it is also one of the most convenient street corners in Boston. The College is easily accessible from all lines of Boston's MBTA public transportation subway and bus system – across the street from the Boylston Street stop on the Green Line and the Silver Line, around the corner from Chinatown stop on the Orange Line and the two blocks from the Park Street Station and Downtown Crossing stop on the Red Line which connects to the Blue Line and East Boston. Urban College of Boston is handicapped accessible as are all of the surrounding and closest MBTA stations that serve the public.

The administrative and faculty offices, the Learning Resource Center, the Writing Lab, the Office of Academic Support, Financial Aid office and Admissions and Registration are housed on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor of the building. The Computer Lab and three classrooms occupy the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and eight classrooms are located on the second, first and lower level floors. With an increase in enrollment, the College has had to rent additional space at 200 Tremont Street, 19 Temple Place and 105 Chauncy Street. These classrooms are used as needed with the current use being approximately six classrooms at all three locations. In considering additional classroom space, the College has been mindful to locate space in close proximity to each other and the main location of the campus.

Students who choose to drive to classes find ample off street parking and often take advantage of the discounted parking rates that the College has negotiated with parking garages located in close proximity to Urban College, including the Ritz complex, just around the corner. For students with disabilities, there is reserved handicap parking and the MBTA provides transportation for disabled students who request rides to and from the College.

Although classrooms are occupied by other organizations during the day, they are exclusively used for the College during evening hours when classes meet. Classroom capacities are from 12

to 25 students, consistent with the Urban College strategy of offering instruction in the relatively intimate scale that small classes afford, while avoiding larger lecture courses.

The College recognizes that some students need a place to relax and prepare themselves for the evening lecture; therefore, a student lounge is located on the third floor, where students can purchase snacks and soft-drinks from the vending machines. This area is furnished with small tables and chairs. Students are also allowed to bring their own snacks or other types of food to the lounge.

### ***Technological Resources***

Urban College has made great strides in ensuring that the administration, staff, faculty and students have direct access to computer technology. Each staff member has a personal computer equipped with Internet access, email, word processing and other networking software appropriate for the job requirement. Opportunities are also available for staff to become more proficient users of information technology.

The full-time faculty also have computers and have access to student information located on the Scholastic Online Information System (SONIS). In addition, two laptops and projector are available for classroom presentations.

The addition of twelve new computers in the Learning Resource Center, expanding from four to twelve, and the formation of the Writing Lab with three computers, has greatly improved students' ability to complete assignments, improved their research skills and their ability to access online financial aid applications and other support mechanisms. In addition, these computers allowed the College to adopt new writing placement assessment (*Accuplacer*) and *Learning-Styles Assessment*. Computers located in the Writing Lab are designated for the exclusive use of students in developmental writing courses. The seventeen computers in the Computer Lab on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor are updated continually to ensure maximum and efficient use of class time. These computers are used solely for classroom use.

### ***Physical and Technological Resource Maintenance***

Office and classroom space is leased to Urban College by its partner and landlord, Action for Boston Community Development, Inc. The College interacts frequently with ABCD's Property Services Department to ensure that requests for services, such as classroom arrangement, building maintenance, lighting, heating and other emerging problems are rapidly resolved. Property Services is also responsible for creating Urban College of Boston signs and banners that are attractive and visible to passersby. This department also ensures speedy snow removal during the winter months and has procedures in place for emergency evacuation of the building in the event of a fire or other life threatening emergencies. (See Exhibit 8.01: *Emergency Procedures for Buildings*.)

The Dean of Enrollment Services and the Dean of Administration maintain constant interactions with Property Services staff, so that the College is ensured a speedy response to space needs and other emergencies.

The College also works closely with ABCD's Department of Information Technology to ensure that the computers purchased are state of the art and equipped with software appropriate for the computer courses that are taught and when purchased for staff, are appropriate for the job requirements. Information Technology also reviews the maintenance agreements and troubleshoots problems that staff may experience with their systems. Regular upgrades of all systems are intended to maximize both system security and productivity.

### ***Legal Regulations, Campus Access, Safety and Security***

All buildings used by Urban College conform to the standards set by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and all students are encouraged to visit the College before they make final decisions on enrollment.

A security guard is always present at the front desk at the entry of each building and both visitors and students are required to sign in at all times. To facilitate student access into the building, ID photos are distributed to new students every semester.

The facilities management staff in buildings used by UCB receives training consistent with OSHA requirements to promote safety in the workplace environment. In addition, the College participates with ABCD in regular unannounced fire drills, one per semester, to ensure that all parties are familiar with the fire drill policy. (See Exhibit 8.02: *Fire Drill and Safety Policy*.) The College is also in compliance with the *Jenny Cleary Disclosures of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act*. (See Exhibit 8.03: *Campus Security Reports*.) The entire UCB staff is informed of the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA) and the College's policies relating to the proper release of information to ensure that a student's right to confidentiality is upheld. (See Exhibit 10.03: *Urban College of Boston Statements, Policies and Disclosures*.) Information regarding all Urban College policies is located in the *College Catalog, Student Handbook, Faculty Handbook* and on the College Website.

### **Appraisal**

The College's central urban location is a key element in the Urban College of Boston's success. Students universally report that they are comfortable coming here. Not only is the College a welcoming and safe place to be, but students also feel comfortable getting here.

Space is a major component for the growth of the Urban College. Both office and classroom spaces are fully utilized.

Over the past four years, Urban College has experienced sustained growth in student enrollment that has necessitated increased investments in UCB's physical and technological advances. Several years ago enrollment exceeded 600 students, which necessitated the implementation of other support programs and hiring of new staff. The highest number of students in the College's history, 752, enrolled in the fall 2005 semester. If this enrollment trend persists, additional support services will have to be introduced. The College may need to identify additional space or consider purchasing its own building, one that is comparable in location, affordability and attractiveness.

Urban College has made vast improvements in its use of computers, a welcome departure from the days in the College's history when staff had to share computers. The addition of more computers and related software has allowed staff and faculty to better collect and present data. The additional computers in the Learning Resource Center and Writing Lab allow for students to access research needed for classroom assignments and has provided the students with greater accessibility to computer skill acquisition.

### ***Institutional Effectiveness***

Confirming the accolades given to the College's location at the beginning of this chapter, it is important to note that *convenience of location* was considered a great strength by 84 percent of the total sample in the *Community Survey*.

Since 2001, the College has expanded classroom space by renting space in two additional buildings. The Learning Resource Center had four computer workstations in 2001; in 2006, there are 12 computers in the Learning Resource Center and three in the Writing Lab.

While strides have been made in specific physical and technological resources over the past several years, in general terms, Standard Eight emerged as one of the weaker areas in both the *Audit* and *Community Survey*. Fifty-nine (59) percent of the total sample regarded this area as one in which Urban College demonstrates great strength. In specific terms, 71 percent felt that *UCB's physical environment provides and maintains an atmosphere conducive for teaching*, and 63 percent felt that *UCB's classrooms, technology, materials, equipment, buildings and grounds are sufficient to meet the needs of the academic programs*. This was the only area, after Planning and Evaluation that received over ten percent negative responses, although those were usually related to very specific physical plant concerns that could be easily addressed.

In addition to annual reviews, Urban College needs to develop a continuous assessment master plan for physical and technological resources and needs.

### **Projection**

- Periodic evaluations of space needs and environmental conditions will need to become formalized with the Property Services Department. A master plan will be developed to

prioritize the College's future needs for classroom, computer lab, library, student support services and office space.

- The College will need to explore the real estate market for a building that accommodates its space needs.
- The College will continue to monitor classroom space needs and provide new allocations of space as appropriate.
- Technology will be evaluated periodically to ensure ongoing effectiveness in the gathering and processing of information and to provide students with up-to-date computer equipment.
- The ongoing mechanisms of security systems will continue to assure UCB students, faculty and staff of their safety and the protection of property.
- The College will continue to ensure that it is in compliance of all OSHA requirements, as well as the *Jenny Cleary Disclosures of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act*, *Americans with Disabilities Act* and the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act*.