FROM THE AVP –

I have watched facilities management in higher education evolve for nearly 50 years; my father was the director of the physical plant at Texas Christian University (TCU) for 17 years. Before he took the job at TCU, my dad had his own air-conditioning business, and he always marveled over and tried to improve upon many of the inefficiencies he found in higher education. When he was offered the position at TCU, the position was named “Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds,” which is the same title that Charles Strickland had when he started at NMSU in 1911. My father asked that the name be changed to the more current, “Director of Physical Plant,” and while certainly there was some ego involved, he wanted to raise the level of professionalism in the organization.

In our world, responding to one emergency after another can appear to be leadership, while solving crises can be very rewarding. Maintenance work is generally boring, consequently both staff and management have a tendency to gravitate towards those activities that are more glamorous. It is definitely more exciting to construct buildings and respond to utility outages than it is to change filters in an air conditioner.

We have the same challenge when we go before the legislature, as the politicians prefer to fund new construction instead of elevator replacements and infrastructure renovations. However, our primary mission and the number one objective is to maintain the investment NMSU has in plant and equipment. Maintenance is simply the execution of basic facilities management.

There seems to be a similar and parallel challenge in every endeavor, from football teams to universities.

In higher education, receiving large research grants is certainly newsworthy, as is a new solar installation or a partnership in another country. I was thinking that with all this effort to create new revenue streams, there could be some risk that the foundational element of teaching might possibly be overlooked.

The leadership team in FS has been reading and discussing Land-Grant Universities for the Future, by Stephen M. Gavazzi and E. Gordon Gee, and in the chapter, Land-Grant Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, they write, “There was a clear sense among the presidents and chancellors that an emphasis on teaching excellence has lagged within the confines of land-grant universities.”
After quoting another university president on the subject, the authors add, “We believe that the lack of emphasis on teaching excellence is troubling at many different levels, not the least of which is that this is precisely what the general public expects of universities. We are also in danger of forgetting our historical roots. After all, offering a practical education for the sons and daughters of toil was part of the original land-grant charter vis-à-vis the Morrill Acts.”

A football squad won’t win many games with only trick plays, and to consistently be victorious a team must to focus on the basics, which in football means keeping penalties and turnovers low or non-existent. For facilities management, the fundamentals are outlined in the APPA standards and in common sense: shorten service response time on work orders, provide efficient and excellent service, keep the lights on, the buildings cool, and the classrooms and offices clean. We measure how we perform and then work on continuous improvement. Wash, rinse, repeat. Dull. Boring. Why we exist.

This is the also the case we make for spending Building Repair and Renewal funds in the manner that they were intended, for Building Repair and Renewal and for maintenance instead of renovations, and it is the foundation for excellent stewardship of the NMSU facilities. We review the overall condition of our campus buildings and infrastructure every year in a dozen categories from roofs to elevators to roads, and we have started a new classroom assessment for the Las Cruces campus. It’s more efficient and less expensive to regularly change the oil in an engine than to keep repairing it.

Executing the basics and sticking to fundamentals was the theme for our service awards this year and we specifically honored those who suit up, show up, and work quietly behind the scenes. We take pride in keeping our eye on the objective and executing the basics even when it’s boring and mundane. In keeping with our focus on the essentials, our pictures include custodial floor restorative work and grounds improvements in addition to the staff award photos from our workforce meeting.

We also have snapshots from the Fire Department meeting with Santa in family housing.
There was one that we didn’t get to hand out at the workforce meeting, the Fire Fighter of the Year went to Sandro Roque.

Sandro Roque began his employment with NMSU’s Fire Department in March of 2017. In addition to being a student firefighter, Sandro has been attending DACC in pursuit of his Associates degree in Fire Science and Emergency Medicine. Sandro was recently selected to participate in the City of Las Cruces 33rd Fire Academy slated to start in February of this year.

We greatly appreciate Assistant VP for HRS Gena Jones, President Floros, and Chancellor Arvizu taking time to speak to our workforce meeting, and we hope everyone had a great holiday.

We wish you the best in 2019, unless of course you have other plans!

Glen
Associate Vice President for Facilities
One Team / One Goal

OUR MISSION IS TO EFFICIENTLY PROVIDE A SAFE, WELL MAINTAINED, AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY...

...AND IT TAKES EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU.

AND AS ALWAYS – THANK YOU FOR ALL THAT YOU DO!