The Ultimate Merger - Business Meets Architecture
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TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Florida A&M University’s (FAMU) facilities management degree program had an accreditation site visit from the International Facility Management Association (IFMA) Foundation recently where the FAMU Facility Management Academic Advisory Council also signed its charter. FAMU now offers a bachelor of science in business administration with a program major in facilities management. This new major has been created, planned and developed with the School of Business and Industry (SBI), the School of Architecture (SOA) and IFMA.

The program is the only accredited facilities management degree program in the state of Florida and historically black college or university.

“Facilities management covers an extended range of core competencies,” said Steve Lockwood, the director of Academic Affairs for IFMA. “This is one of the first programs that we’ve had accredited that’s in the School of Business and Industry, predominantly coming from a management side, that crosses over into the School of Architecture.”

The advisory council consists of 12 volunteer professionals committed to sharing expertise and advice partnering with the university president, provost and deans of the SBI and SOA to advance and expand FAMU’s inaugural Facilities Management Academic Program.

“There is a need to have a combination of technical business and leadership skills that can be effectively applied to ensure the experience within built space is enjoyable, economical and sustainable,” said FAMU Facility Management Academic Advisory Council Chair Thomas Mitchell Jr.

Typically it takes a program two to four years to earn its accreditation. SBI and SOA are wasting no time. The curriculum has so far met nine out of the 11 core competencies in order to gain accreditation. Full accreditation is anticipated in half the time generally expected.

During the site visit, there was an overview session of facilities management hosted in SOA. The session was split in two parts featuring three student presentations and a panel of FAMU SOA alumni working in the capacity of facilities management.

According to Mitchell, the merger between the two schools is a perfect example of how facilities management encloses multiple disciplines together. SBI and SOA faculty see where their knowledge and skills are intricate components to ensuring the functionality of the built environment.

“What the program does is create a pipeline for people that are specifically educated in multiple discipline areas,” said David Castro of Jones Lang LaSalle.
Modeled after Ferris State University in Michigan, Roscoe Hightower of SBI and Professor Ronald Lumpkin of SOA crafted the undergraduate curriculum. Both schools have worked profusely to create opportunities to give emerging leaders the skills needed to have a direct influence on ensuring the functionality of the work environment. Students can enter the program as freshman or transfer into the program.

“To leverage FAMU’s many strengths, this model will hopefully be focused across campus to deliver a cross-discipline program so other curriculums can be generated and implemented during these economic times,” said Hightower.

The program is already helping students to excel. Recently, Lucy Diala, a graduate student majoring in business administration and landscape architecture, was named the Suncoast Chapter of IFMA 2012 scholarship recipient.

“While my education and professional experience in landscape architecture has so far provided insight into the planning and design of land infrastructure, I expect the next phase… to focus on facilities planning management,” said Diala. “I plan to complete all required courses and certification exams that will allow me to gain competence as a facilities planning manager.”