A History of the Facilities Services Department

The Physical Plant in any facility can be compared to the hub of a wheel. It is the center (the hub) with the many shops (the spokes) that keep the operations moving forward. The term “physical plant” for North Carolina Central University (NCCU) refers to the Physical Plant building on Eagle Campus Drive. Although the building is not large, in comparison to the other buildings on campus, we all know looks can be deceiving. This building is home base for the mechanical trades and environmental staff who are responsible for operations and maintenance of buildings and grounds at NCCU. These areas maintain operations for campus buildings that total approximately 1,340,000 square feet as of 2008, with more expansion planned in the future. This square footage does not include the residence halls. Work areas include mechanical, electrical, and utility systems, doors, windows, locks, painted surfaces, roof drains, elevators, plumbing, trash and debris removal, landscaping, etc.

The earliest listings found in archives do not refer to the term physical plant; the references are to Maintenance Shops. Housekeeping staff were listed in the buildings they were responsible for cleaning. The Central Heating Plant was constructed in 1950. The administrative staff for the physical plant was housed at 525 Nelson Street which was constructed in 1963 and listed in records as Faculty Cottage D. According to the NCCU List of Buildings and Characteristics, the Physical Plant was built in 1977 and the facilities services departments were all housed in one building. As a point of interest, the Security Office for NCCU was also housed in the Physical Plant until 1991. Some internal renovations have been made since 1977 to allow for better functionality and use of the building.

There have been numerous leaders for the Physical Plant. Earlier records report the title as Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds. This position was held by Robert G. Duncan (1958). Mr. Duncan’s obituary lists him as working at NCCU in the 1940s. However, the first listing that was verified in archives states Robert G. Duncan was Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds in 1958. Mr. Jamin R. Peddy held the position of Assistant Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds from 1958 to at least 1971 when records show his title as being Superintendent. In 1977 when William E. McDonald joined NCCU, his title was Director of Physical Plant. Mr. McDonald held this position from 1977 through 1991 and was followed by Dr. Oseh Edward King from 1992 until October 15, 1994. Thereafter, Mr. McDonald returned to the Physical Plant as Interim Director until Mr. Kerry O. Randel assumed the role of Director in 1995. Several others have followed: Mr. Edward Eng (1998 – 2000), Mr. Robert Melton (2001), Mr. George Engram, Jr. (2002 – 2003), and Mr. Duane Knecht (2004 – 2006). On November 1, 2006, Mr. Phillip A. Powell, Sr. took the reigns as Director of the Physical Plant and Facilities and continues to hold that position today.

The Mission Statement for the Facilities Services Department is to effectively and efficiently provide services that support the faculty, staff, and students in pursuit of excellence in their individual and institutional, academic, research, and community objectives. The goals of the department are directed at facilitating a proper environment to meet the current and future needs of the university as set forth in the University’s Strategic Plan. To this end, the department will strive to cooperate fully with all campus constituents to provide a functional and efficient facilities operation for the university. The Facilities Services Department is part of Facilities Management in the Administration and Financial Affairs Division.

Facilities Services, as it is known today, is comprised of 11 administrative and engineering positions and 83 mechanical trades and environmental staff positions. The areas that comprise Facilities Services are Auto, Carpentry, Central Heating, Electrical, Grounds, Housekeeping, HVAC, Locksmith, Painting, Plumbing, Engineering, and HVAC Preventive Maintenance. The Facilities Services staff takes pride in its work and exemplifies NCCU’s motto: Truth and Service.

Prepared by Mr. Phillip Powell
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