Facilities & Services

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An Illini Future Connects to the Past

- Makeover Coming to Altgeld Hall
- New Illini Hall on the Way

SEE MORE

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- Apprentices Earn Certifications
- Tours Are Back at F&S
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Boehm, Varney Named Division Directors

Dave Boehm has been named director of Building Maintenance and Grounds and Pete Varney has been named director of Building Services and Transportation. Dave brings 40 years of higher education experience to his role. Before joining F&S in 2015 as director of Building Maintenance, he spent decades in facilities for public sector higher education. Pete started his time at F&S as a student employee with the Garage and Car Pool in 1991. Since then, Varney became transportation manager, associate director of Customer Relations & Communications, and associate director of Transportation & Automotive Services.

Grand Openings for Capital Projects

Powering Up: Apprentice Certifications Show Employee Development

Welders have a lot to learn. There’s various techniques, each offering their own challenges, before even considering the plethora of materials one can weld. All in all, there might be 100 certifications in pipe welding mastery alone.

Before you know it, a couple of apprentices at F&S will have learned a bunch of them!

How I Got Started: Carey Kaeding

“How I got started is, I actually graduated from the U of I in exercise science, and was looking into medical profession. I did that for a few years, and I figured out it wasn’t the direction I wanted to go. My dad was a machinist his whole life; my grandfather was a pipefitter in the UA Local 149. It was almost ‘in my blood.’ I was around it a lot. I just did a complete flip of gears to do something else. The union offers good pay, the focus is on safety, we care about members having good quality hours, and time to spend with family. It all attracted me to the trades.”

How I Got Started: Brandon Lovett

“My neighbor owned a fabrication shop, and by the time I was 12 or 13, I was working for him, pushing brooms or whatever small stuff he had. He is kind of the guy who helped get me curious about welding. In high school, I took classes up at the Kankakee Area Career Center and after graduation segue into jobs similar to welding. After jobs in Illinois and California in maintenance and pipelining, I came back and eventually got an apprenticeship with the UA Local 149.”

“The is a good career. Rewarding if you like to work with your hands. You get out on projects, you are there from start to finish, the progression, ad all the hard work of making some of these systems work.”

How I Got Started: Brandon Lovett

“Compared to most apprentices, they’re way ahead of where they should be... A lot of that comes from their own willingness to go to class and do extra classes and on the job training. They are both doing a really good job. ”

Said Doug Winkler, pipefitters foreperson, who oversees Kaeding:

“Compared to most apprentices, they are way ahead of where they should be,” said Jason Hart, utilities pipefitters foreperson. “A lot of apprentices don’t get certifications at all. A lot of that comes from their willingness to go to class and do extra classes and on the job training. They are both doing a really good job.”

Employee development is an emphasis in the F&S Strategic Plan 2019-2023: Foundations for the Future, listed as the first point for the first theme (People). Measures are in place to allow the best chance for training and leadership skills, but employees must take the initiative. To their credit, Lovett and Kaeding have sacrificed their time to grow their knowledge base.

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— Jason Hart, utilities pipefitters foreperson

“From start to finish, the progression, all the hard work of making some of these systems work.”

Supervisors of the two men recognize and appreciate seeing hard, extra work.

“I actually graduated from the U of I in exercise science, and was looking into medical profession. I did that for a few years, and I figured out it wasn’t the direction I wanted to go. My dad was a machinist his whole life; my grandfather was a pipefitter in the UA Local 149. It was almost ‘in my blood.’ I was around it a lot. I just did a complete flip of gears to do something else. The union offers good pay, the focus is on safety, we care about members having good quality hours, and time to spend with family. It all attracted me to the trades.”

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Things have changed at F&S, at the world-class University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, in the state, and country. But through it all, we have delivered innovative solutions to solve real world challenges, all while expanding our customer service efforts. Our daily service work never stopped and organizational leaders came together to help lead campus get through a trying period.

As 2021 comes to a close, and you spend time with family, friends, and loved ones during the winter, consider how F&S may have impacted life safety on campus, promoted sustainability, and allowed for in-person teaching. These are goals essential to our mission in our F&S Strategic Plan 2019-2023: Foundations for the Future.

As you’ll see in a story in this issue, our executive leadership has placed a priority on developing the workforce, something F&S apprentices delivered by earning important certifications. We aim to be responsive and reliable and I think we have hit those goals.

Next year will bring unexpected changes, almost surely. And we’ll be ready for everything 2022 has to offer.

Letter from the Interim Executive Director

What a year.

2021 has been a challenge unlike any of our predecessors have lived through. Every division, every work order request, and every new initiative and project have been impacted by the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. For a full consideration of how F&S has adjusted priorities and tasks to this new reality, visit: https://fs.illinois.edu/resources/covid-response.

Pete Varney, associate director of Customer Relations & Facilities for public sector higher education. Pete started his time at F&S as a student employee with the Garage and Car Pool in 1991. Since then, Varney became transportation manager, associate director of Customer Relations & Communications, and associate director of Transportation & Automotive Services.
An Illini Future

The construction project for Altgeld Hall, at the corner of Wright Street and Green Street and home to the Alma Mater statue, and replacement of the historic Illini Hall, just across the street, will help define a vital thoroughfare on campus. The work will help take the College of Liberal Art & Sciences (LAS), Department of Mathematics and Statistics, and the campus’ future in data sciences programs and collaborations into the next generation. What’s the role of F&S?

Funding

F&S uses money from the Academic Facilities Maintenance Fund Assessment (AFMFA) which is funded by student fees to address deferred maintenance (DM) projects. DM accounts for millions of dollars worth of projects that are in need of repair, rehabilitation, or removal.

The AFMFA Oversight Committee approved $27M for the Altgeld Hall renovation. The committee includes Illinois students and administrators, including Dr. Ehab Kamarah, interim executive director, and ex officio Brad Klein, interim associate director project planning. AFMFA projects prioritize life safety deficiencies, but also accounts for impacting high-profile buildings, aids in conservation, operations, and maintenance needs, and helps support emerging fields of study. The Altgeld-Illini Hall project fits perfectly.

“How we use AFMFA funds is extremely critical, and helping fund this project is a tremendous way to improve the core of campus,” said Kamarah. “The committee does its best to properly evaluate all maintenance needs and strategically select projects that help achieve university goals.”

In total, the project is expected to cost $192M; $140M comes from the State of Illinois, with the rest of the funding coming from the Office of the Provost and College of LAS.

Design

First off, Altgeld Hall will remain iconic and the bells will still chime across campus for all to hear. The fashionable red shingles atop the chime tower will still shine on sunny days and glow through snowy ones. In fact, the point of the project is to keep much of what remains, while also bringing back Illinois history through restoration of intricate floor mosaics, murals, paintings, and woodwork. A large painted glass dome, featuring greens, ambers, purples, and cobalt blues, will take visitors back to 1896, but without the life safety worries that caused its removal in 1941.

The new Illini Hall will host a data science center and serve in the Illinois Innovation Network.

“Maintaining a cohesive visual identity is paramount, and Illini Hall will go hand-in-hand with older buildings and newer ones, too.”

– Brent Lewis, ARC member and university landscape architect

Life Safety

“Project manager Mike Stilger is proud to oversee the development, knowing how unique, challenging, and big it is. Even doing what will come first takes care: demolition of Illini Hall.

It won’t come down in one grand collapse and a giant dust cloud. Instead, “the first thing we have to do is address the hazardous materials inside the building, like asbestos and lead, which have to be abated. You can’t just take those things to the landfill,” said Stilger. Then, a demolition excavator (sometimes called a “grabber”) can reach out to tear down the façade in little bites. As every piece of metal, wood and other shrapnel come off the structure, each needs to be sorted to sell, recycle, or properly dispose of; this also helps the building gain LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) points to help the project become considered sustainable.

Management

F&S Capital Programs project managers (PM) help keep construction projects on budget and on schedule for a satisfied customer. PMs put out bids, hold the agreements with contractors, and take consideration of design standards and the needs of the building user, in this case the college of LAS, particularly the departments of mathematics and statistics.

Project manager Mike Stilger is proud to oversee the development, knowing how unique, challenging, and big it is. Even doing what will come first takes care: demolition of Illini Hall.

Finding ways to use parts of the past to build anew is always a goal of ARC. A well-known example is the Hallerle Gateway, formerly part of the University Hall building (1871-1938), which now prominently sits at the corner of Lincoln Avenue and Illinois Street to welcome students and visitors to the Alice Campbell Alumni Center and water fountain. No large-scale elements like that will appear in the next Illini Hall, but there’s still ways to fold the old in with the new.

“Illini Hall will be new construction but offer glimpses of the past,” said Brent Lewis, ARC member and university landscape architect. One feature to deliver on this concept is the use of blackboards throughout the spaces outside classrooms, in hallways and alcoves, or other places where students can collaborate. “Maintaining a cohesive visual identity is paramount, and Illini Hall will go hand-in-hand with older buildings and newer ones, too.”

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Tours Open Again

The impact of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic is widespread. Most operational aspects at F&S continued, but under much different guidelines and challenges than before. One that couldn’t continue: public tours. As a university resource provider, F&S offers facility tour opportunities, especially to students and children.

Garage and Car Pool; Waste Transfer Station

Nobody loves big trucks more than a bunch of little kids!

Area pre-school and elementary students, and other youngsters come to see how garbage can be hoisted up off the ground and witness vehicle maintenance and repair right there in front of their eyes! The Garage and Car Pool services does more than 5,000 rentals per year using more than 100 vehicles.

Over at the nearby Waste Transfer Station (WTS), garbage and recycling materials are separated on a conveyor belt, while huge, 10-feet cubes of cardboard are moved by forklifts. More than four million pounds of material is recycled yearly thanks to WTS.

To schedule a tour, fill out this form online: https://go.fs.illinois.edu/RecyclingTour

Abbott Power Plant

Abbott isn’t just a one-of-a-kind co-generation power station for a massive campus; it’s a historical landmark and might make for a cool social media post!

Once it turned on the lights in 1940, additions and alterations have been made to allow for more modes of energy production. But massive and capable turbines that have operated since as far back as 1940 remain. After all, reliability is the landmark of a power plant like Abbott. Once inside and donning your safety helmet, goggles, and ear protection, you can see a landscape of pipes, gauges, and skilled operators, each working in harmony to supply most of the steam and electricity to campus buildings.

To schedule a tour, fill out this form online: https://go.fs.illinois.edu/Abbott-Tours

Solar Farm

You can once again walk amongst the panels of the prairie.

Engineering and ecological students alike, as well as the public, can visit the solar farm installations south of campus. Solar Farm 2.0 is particularly large and features the most up-to-date solar energy technologies available. Solar Farm 2.0 is on 54 acres and produces 12.3 megawatts (MWdc). Knowledgeable experts in renewable and utility-scale energy can answer questions and provide an idea of the scale and impact of the technology.

To schedule a tour, fill out this form online: https://go.fs.illinois.edu/SolarFarmtours

Four and Looking for More

After winning four straight times in the International Laboratory Freezer Challenge, the U of I can still save more energy and money in the future, particularly if Paul Foote has his way.

“I want every lab on campus to know about and participate in the Freezer Challenge,” said Foote, energy conservation specialist.

“Small changes, like defrosting a freezer or adjusting its temperature, can have a huge effect.”

Foote has worked with laboratory managers across campus, from plants to animals and everything in between, to find ways to better improve cold storage practices. These collaborations help bring F&S closer to the campus research community by offering a simple way to help the greater good.

Thirty-four labs participated in helping save the university 383,075 KWH vs in 2021, a cost avoidance of approximately $32,385.

Julie Nguyen, a lab manager with the facilities in Veterinary Medicine, has taken steps to participate in the program in past years. Her work in 2020 alone earned her special recognition from My Green Labs and the International Institute for Sustainable Laboratories, which run the Freezer Challenge.

“I feel that these practices are important for any lab anywhere,” said Nguyen. “The changes are easy to make and have a big impact on sustainability on campus.”

To participate, visit freezerchallenge.org or email Paul Foote gfoote2@illinois.edu.
Shop Spotlight: Temperature Control

It’s been a big couple of years for HVAC. Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning technologies have never been under more scrutiny and attention, due to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A multi-disciplinary team, including leaders from F&S in construction, HVAC, and safety, oversaw the examination of all current and installation of new university HVAC systems. To see a published list of completed work, visit: https://go.fs.illinois.edu/HVACSystems.

When time came to turn wrenches and make adjustments, the temperature control shop was there to help complete the work.

Temperature control oversees public spaces, offices, and classrooms, sure. And comfort for students, faculty, and staff is important. But often overlooked is the importance of HVAC in research laboratories: precise and reliable temperatures and humidity levels are needed to ensure scientific integrity.

“It takes skilled technicians and good communication ... To be a good service provider you need people that have both of those skillsets, and our team is exceptional.”

~ Travis Huls, temperature control foreperson

In other spaces, ventilation is essential to life safety needs for faculty and students.

Travis Huls, temperature control foreperson, saw factors like these in refurbishments and upgrades at Edward R. Madigan Laboratory.

“The recent temperature control upgrade there comes to mind, because our group coordinated with electricians and programmers to upgrade several large air handlers and heat exchangers,” said Huls. “Madigan is one of the largest lab and animal research facilities on campus, and doing an upgrade of that scope while keeping the equipment operational was a challenging task.”

Just as important to assessing and completing the work is updating customers as the project completes phases, according to Huls.

“It takes skilled technicians and good communication, our people are not only efficient at diagnosing and repairing HVAC controls, but are also very experienced in customer service. To be a good service provider you need people that have both of those skill sets, and our team is exceptional.”