The Service Office: Leveraging the COVID Opportunity

F&S performs essential, daily work across the entire Urbana campus, repairs equipment or building systems as needed, and maintains integral relationships with students, faculty, and staff. Most of that work is generated from one place: the Service Office.

This ordinary office space filled with computers and telephones is home to an extraordinary effort that enables customers to quickly and securely get answers and actions from their questions and needs.

Service office support associates work the phone lines and track email and online requests.

Often, customers call in for a new service request, or to ask for updates on that project. Other times, campus customers may need to ask about more complex issues such as starting a capital project or questions about making decisions to positively impact energy sustainability. Of course, since March, those calls have come into the office about recommended protocols for HVAC systems or spacing out classroom instruction desks and anything else related to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Most of the calls coming in can be routed quickly," said Jerry Dinnin, Service Office supervisor.

"For instance, when snow hits campus, we know we’ll get calls about areas outside of buildings with persistent ice and snow. But on other, less common topics, our team works daily to ensure that the other calls and requests can get to experts as soon as possible."

The office’s reliability is another strength. The office has remained open throughout the pandemic, just adding safety and health protocols to their space: large plexiglass barriers, more closed doors, and behavioral recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) allowed the team to continue to support campus service requests.

"I’m proud of how our team has stepped up during a very difficult time," said Dinnin. "The calls, emails, and requests from campus are each individually important and we want to please our customers. I feel like we’ve accomplished that."

As the first point of contact, the Service Office is ready to help leverage the experience and capabilities of F&S departments. The Service Office can assist with general customer inquiries by quickly routing questions to subject matter experts within F&S, whether a building service worker, carpenter, or project manager.

In the case of an urgent event, like a gas leak affecting multiple locations, the Service Office will quickly notify building and facility managers and other members on campus to inform them of any updates.

"Our Service Office is an essential team for all of F&S and campus," said Curt Taylor, director of Shared Administrative Services. "They provide vital communications and routing each business day in a professional manner."

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