

\$8.4 Billion in Deferred Maintenance Jeopardizes American Agriculture Research and Education

America's colleges and schools of agriculture educate the next generation of leaders in this most important of industries, conduct the research that will allow us to provide food and renewable feedstocks for a growing world population, and take science-based education to every county in the U.S. The physical infrastructure that supports these activities that are a foundation of our national competitiveness in food, agriculture, and natural resources are aging, inadequate, and, in many cases, obsolete.

Sightlines LLC, a national consulting firm that advises over 450 colleges and universities on managing and funding their campus facilities, conducted an in-depth analysis of facilities within the institutions represented by the APLU's Board on Agriculture Assembly.

Utilizing building level data supplied by 91 schools of agriculture and analysis of over 15,000 facilities with 87 million gross square feet valued at over \$29 billion, this study is the largest and most comprehensive of schools of agriculture in the United States. The conclusions about the age of the buildings, the lack of capital investment in them over time and the levels of deferred maintenance needs are sobering—***the total deferred maintenance cost is at least \$8.4 billion.***

Analyzing deferred maintenance per gross square foot (GSF) provides a benchmark allowing for comparisons among individual institutions or regions. The figure of \$8.4 billion equates to \$95/GSF. Sightlines research indicates that when deferred maintenance backlogs reach \$100/GSF, failures in building systems are more likely and the campus maintenance becomes more reactive than proactive. Facilities at schools of agriculture are very close to the critical \$100/GSF number. No region is consistently spending enough to make meaningful progress against the current deferred maintenance backlog.

Recommendations for Moving Forward

So what is the answer to this deferred maintenance problem that jeopardizes the research and education engine of the schools of agriculture funded by USDA and other agencies? No single entity or level of government can shoulder the funding needs. Thus, a multi-faceted set of strategies is needed to address this pressing problem.

- Secure an infusion of matching capital funds from the federal government
- Engage states in making investments in capital funding obligations
- Develop campus-wide long-term capital plans to address deferred maintenance problems and proactively address future maintenance of facilities in good condition
- Fully fund university facility and administration (indirect) costs on competitive grants to help finance good stewardship

Key Sightlines Findings

- \$8.4 billion in total deferred maintenance cost
- 15,000+ buildings with a replacement value of \$29 billion
- \$95/GSF of campus space (\$100/GSF may trigger system failures)
- 54% of facilities were constructed during the post-war/modern era. These ageing buildings account for 68% of deferred maintenance needs (*see graph, right*)
- Over \$5 billion of the deferred maintenance falls into science research (\$3.2 billion) and classroom/teaching (\$2.0 billion)
- Only 20% of schools of agriculture invest at levels that would at least stabilize, if not decrease, the backlog of deferred maintenance
- 80% of the campuses are investing capital at such a low level that they will continue to add to the backlog of deferred maintenance every year

Post-war/Modern Era Buildings Highly At-Risk

