

The image shows the main entrance to Mount Holyoke College, featuring a large, ornate stone gate with two prominent towers topped with domes. The gate is set against a clear blue sky with some greenery visible in the background. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white banner across the middle of the image.

Mount Holyoke College

Facilities Master Plan Study: Building Community

Executive Summary

February 2015

Purpose

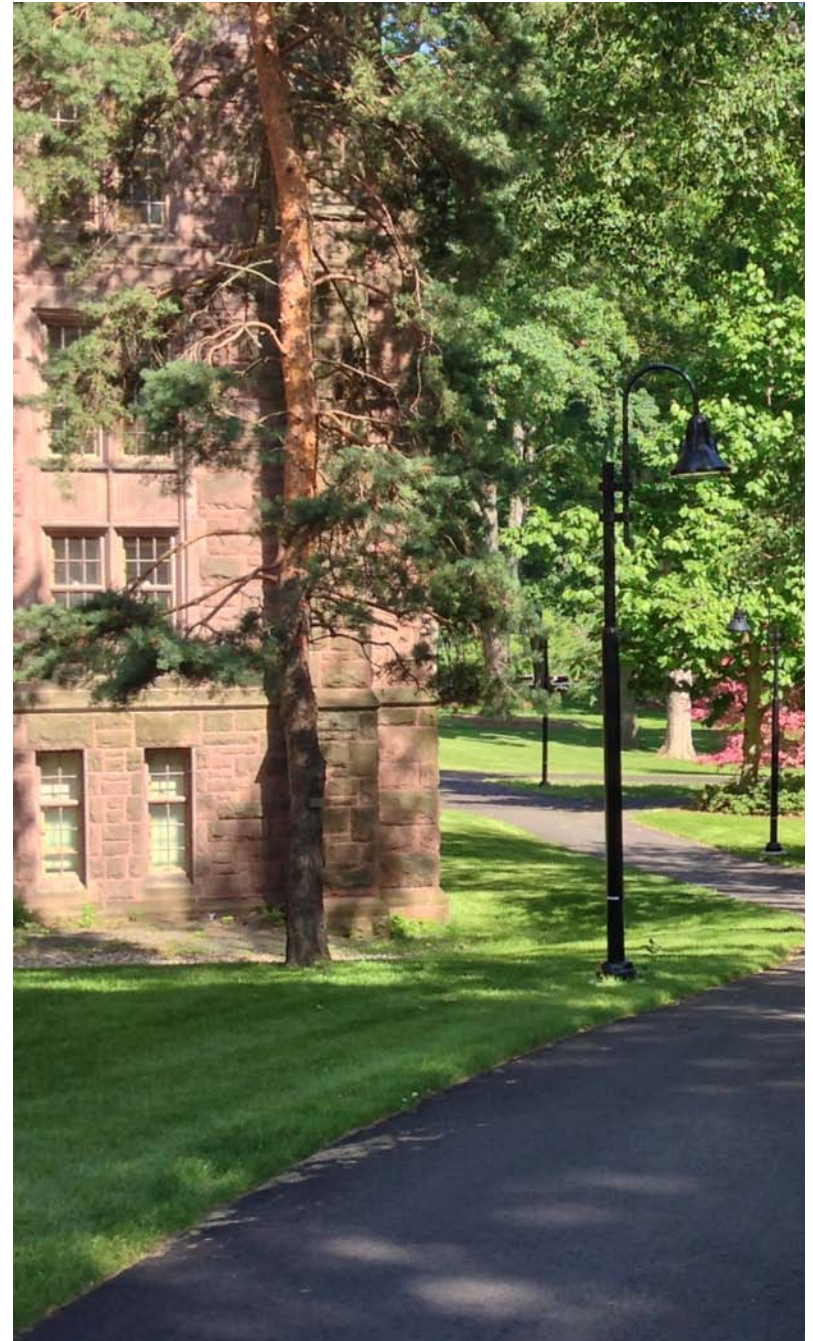
Mount Holyoke College was founded by Mary Lyon in 1837 as the Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, the first of the all-female “Seven Sisters” colleges. Today, the College is a private, highly selective, residential, research liberal arts college for women in suburban South Hadley. Rich in tradition, the College’s website devotes an entire section to the many ongoing traditions that give depth to its history and enliven its current culture. Mount Holyoke’s 173-acre main campus is widely regarded as one of the most beautiful in the country, with open lawns surrounded by mature trees and well-loved historic buildings.

In October 2013, Mount Holyoke College engaged Rickes Associates (RA) to develop an overall, comprehensive Facilities Master Plan (FMP). The purpose of the FMP is to determine the type and amount of space the College needs to fulfill its mission over the next 10 to 15 years, identify the highest and best use of existing campus space as related to Mount Holyoke’s academic and strategic mission, and provide the College with the tools needed to make data-driven decisions about the future use of existing space resources.

Mount Holyoke’s new Facilities Master Plan is designed to be:

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- Grounded in Mount Holyoke’s institutional strategic drivers,
- Respectful of the College’s traditions,
- Based on a new space inventory database developed by RA in conjunction with the College’s Department of Facilities Management,
- Informed by the College’s specific needs, goals, and aspirations, and
- Developed within Mount Holyoke’s unique strategic and historical contexts.





Goals

Mount Holyoke's goals for the Facilities Master Plan emerged and were refined in a richly interactive process with the College and its board of trustees that took place during a yearlong process.

The *Facilities Master Plan: Building Community* was based on the overarching goal that emerged from faculty, staff, and student feedback during the FMP process: the desire to build community at multiple levels outside of the classroom among students, between students and faculty, among the faculty, and among staff members.

While Mount Holyoke has a vibrant academic community, the need for a variety of spaces for social and cocurricular connections—including “one place where we can all get together”—was described by faculty, staff, and students in almost every FMP meeting. The FMP therefore recommends adding at Mount Holyoke the kinds of spaces that contribute to community-making.

Goals



ATTRACT AND RETAIN STUDENTS

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- Understand, prioritize, and provide the space needs identified by students, with an eye towards what the next generation of students will need.
- Invest the College's resources where they will best enhance the quality of students' experience and support their success at Mount Holyoke.
- Preserve both Mount Holyoke's strong, living traditions and its commitment to excellence in education for the future.
- Provide equal access for all members of the community to all facilities and programs on campus.

OPTIMIZE SPACE RESOURCES

- Focus financial resources on developing the most central core of the campus to meet the needs of the students of the future.
- Renovate existing facilities, rather than build new, where feasible and practicable.
- Determine how to replace functions currently housed in costly-to-update, high-maintenance-cost buildings that the College has accumulated over time.
- Thoughtfully assess the demolition and/or long-term replacement of buildings that are past their useful lives.
- Ensure the environmentally responsible stewardship of the campus.
- Ensure that flexibility is built into the design of future facilities.

ENHANCE COMMUNITY

- Activate those buildings on campus that are currently underutilized to give the campus a much-needed sense of vitality, energy, and density.
- Optimize the use of every building, and repurpose buildings with spaces appropriate to enriching the sense of community.
- Provide specific types of community-building space identified by the College and recommended by the Working Group.

Process

The development of the new Facilities Master Plan involved both quantitative and qualitative analyses that included:

- Identifying and analyzing sets of quantitative data collected from the College,
- Obtaining information regarding current space use and future plans by reviewing existing planning and narrative documents and plans,
- Overseeing the development of the College's space inventory,
- Interviewing over 300 members of the Mount Holyoke community who use its spaces, and
- Interpreting all of this data through the lens of Mount Holyoke's strategic perspective.



Strategic Drivers

Strategic drivers are the key quantitative factors that help determine the amount and type of space needed by an institution to achieve its strategic goals.

Fall 2013



Challenges

As with most colleges and universities across the country, there are a number of challenges facing Mount Holyoke, some shared by others, some unique to Mount Holyoke. The FMP was asked to address the following challenges:

Changing demographics The decreasing size of the national college-age population impacts all higher education institutions. An all-women's college is affected even more than coed colleges, as the total pool of women seeking non-coed education decreases even further.

Mismatch between the current campus and student expectations Mount Holyoke is a truly beautiful and memorable campus, but in some ways it has not kept pace with its peers in terms of providing the kind of spaces that today's students seek.

Outdated instructional spaces The College has not updated its classroom inventory to support changes in pedagogy. Instructional space capacities also are not a good fit with course sizes.

Missed opportunities to build community The Blanchard Student Center was a step in the right direction but did not/was not able to go far enough to create a social and cocurricular center for the community.

Aging campus Over 77 percent of Mount Holyoke's buildings are 50+ years old. Many are overdue for renovation and will require significant resources for deferred maintenance.

ADA compliance Mount Holyoke has made substantial progress in making the campus accessible, but another \$9 million in needed accessibility improvements have been identified.

Common Themes and Key Findings

The many hours of discussion over the past year with members of Mount Holyoke's community resulted in the emergence of common themes and the identification of key findings that informed the FMP recommendations.

Overall Theme

A greater sense of community is the highest priority need described by members of the College community, along with more and better space to support a variety of community activities.

Student Life

Up-to-date housing, choices in residential types, and a more active social life are the highest priority student needs. Research indicates that these are also key to retaining students over time.

It is time for a new, more modern community dining center that provides meals to the overall community, builds community, and better supports current and future student lifestyles. The existing, traditional residential dining hall system is no longer financially feasible, nor does it meet the needs of most students.

Academic Life

Instructional spaces are underutilized. The College's classrooms and labs could hold as many as 15 percent more students than they do currently.

The lack of fit between the size and configurations of the College's classrooms and the courses taught in them impacts pedagogy, occupant comfort, and learning.

There is adequate space within the classroom inventory to create innovative instructional spaces, to right-size classrooms, as well as to meet other space needs.

Space Utilization

Approximately 50,000 ASF of "opportunity space" in the classroom and lab buildings, and in the residence halls, is potentially available to fill other space needs identified by the FMP.

The number of students the campus can hold—the instructional space "carrying capacity"—is **2,557 students for classrooms and 2,442 students for labs**. When compared to the fall 2013 enrollment of 2,183 and the long-range target of 2,050 students, it is clear that there is "opportunity space" available within the College's current facilities to meet many of its current and future space needs.

The "**highest and best use**" analysis of the 77 buildings on campus found that:

- 28 buildings should remain in their current functions and require long-term plans to address their deferred maintenance needs,
- 8 residence halls are in need of renovation in the near future,
- 3 academic buildings are in need of renovation in the mid-to-long term,
- 15 high-maintenance buildings should be divested over the long-term, and
- 3 residence halls and 6 academic buildings should be assessed for long-term demolition and replacement.



Recommendations

At the start of the FMP process, RA was directed by the FMP Working Group to create “a bold plan.” This section describes the recommended priority order for each of the major recommendations in the FMP.

For every recommendation, different internal issues will arise, each with its own political and cultural implications for the College. **To advance this plan, Mount Holyoke will need to engage in a series of conversations with its community to inform decision-making.** These conversations should be supported by internal assessments and evaluations, and, in some cases, leveraged with external expertise. The College can then determine what can be done, at what cost, and in what time frame.

The recommendations at the heart of the FMP are described in the next section, in suggested order of priority. The specific time frames for implementation of each recommendation will depend on the funds available and the identification of new space for key functions.

1. Build a community center with dining
2. Reclaim opportunity space
3. Revitalize instructional space and create an academic commons
4. Continue to renovate and update the residence halls
5. Plan to maintain the highest and best use buildings
6. Divest costly-to-maintain buildings
7. Assess candidates for long-term demolition and replacement
8. Develop plans to fund long-term major renovations of Clapp, the Library, and Kendall



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