

University of Florida: Shining a Light on Facilities Management Data

The University of Florida (UF) serves as the vibrant heart of Gainesville, Florida. Boasting a staggering population of approximately 60,000 students and 30,000 employees, the university operates like a self-sustaining city, supported by its robust facilities operations division. To propel UF's progress and expansion, the Facilities Services team plays a crucial role, heavily dependent on precise operational data to make well-informed decisions and secure vital funding.



Number of buildings: 1000



Acreage: 2000 acres on main campus



Square footage: 24,700 square feet



Students: ~60,000



Employees: ~27,000



Facilities Employees: 856

The above data is accurate as of the time of publication, May 2024.

UF partnered with AssetWorks to empower its facilities division in extracting valuable operational data.

Utilizing the comprehensive suite of AssetWorks' solutions, namely ReADY, AiM, and Go, the university gained the ability to more easily assess its facilities environment with both broad and granular perspectives. By leveraging AiM's robust data capabilities, the team successfully secured an impressive \$148 million in funding to address deferred maintenance issues.



ReADY Request

A user-friendly and integrated work order request solution designed with campus community engagement in mind.



AiM

An enterprise-class Integrated Workplace Management System (IWMS) that covers core pillars such as Operations and Maintenance, Capital Planning and Project Management, Space Management, Real Estate and Property Management, and Energy Management.



Go

Persona and function-based mobile apps designed to empower your personnel in the field.



The AssetWorks products that we have integrated over the years have really given us the tools that we've needed to track funding on our assets, make decisions about repair versus replacement, and have in-depth conversations around deferred maintenance dollars and how we spend those funds."

Said **Jordan Benton**, Assistant Director of Business Operations at **Facilities Services**.

The Story of **The University of Florida**

Established in 1853, the University of Florida, located in Gainesville, proudly holds the distinction of being the **fifth-largest school in the United States in terms of enrollment**. Its profound influence is reflected in the city of Gainesville, which has evolved around this academic institution. The main campus of UF covers an extensive area of over 2,000 acres, featuring a remarkable collection of over 1,000 buildings. Collectively, these structures occupy almost 25 million square feet of space, an area nearly five times larger than the Mall of America. This sprawling campus size positions UF as one of the largest employers in the state. Additionally, the university's impactful research endeavors have surpassed a remarkable one billion dollars in value.

State-awarded funding helps UF progress with its purposes of education, research, and elevating Florida's environment and economy. The Facilities Services team is responsible for maintaining and preserving university assets and grounds and needs reliable insight to justify its capital projects supporting the university's core mission.



The Challenge: The Fight for Funding and Underutilization of a Reporting Powerhouse

Complex Variables

The University of Florida has many unique aspects to its campus. As a sizeable university dating back to the nineteenth century, UF has an assortment of both classic and new facilities.

Despite the abundance of new cutting-edge research and academic and athletic facilities, the university keeps the historic center as the foundation and heart of the campus's layout. These nuances to their campus do have unique impacts when acquiring funding.

"UF's gothic architecture and dense layout is very unique from an operational and funding perspective. We have very limited funds to maintain those buildings, as I'm sure is the case for many of our colleagues in higher education," said Benton. "Then we also have the dichotomy of the newer buildings we bring on for research purposes. The disparate ways that we have to deal with that in terms of funding and approach to maintenance is a highly unique challenge."

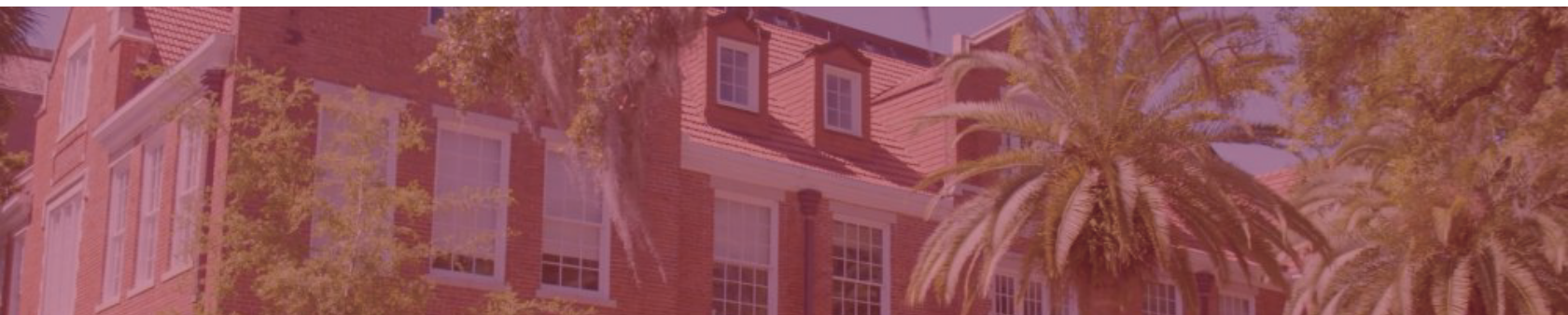
Operational separateness is also a challenge for Katie Karwan, Assistant Director of Auxiliary Support Services. Karwan is responsible for three highly differentiated auxiliary departments: motor pool operation, inventory management operations, and recycling and solid waste. *"The recycling and solid waste operation alone is the equivalent of that of a medium-sized city, so it's a big job,"* says Karwan. A scope of this size requires many moving parts and interoperability to maintain success.

With such vast project scopes, expanding even beyond the examples above, securing funding is pivotal to maintaining such aspects of the university. The challenge of advocating for state funding intensifies when quantifiable and definitive evidence is not easily or readily obtainable. Without the ability to leverage data in demonstrating expected operational improvements and return on investment, the potential to secure necessary funding significantly diminishes.

Underutilizing an Existing System

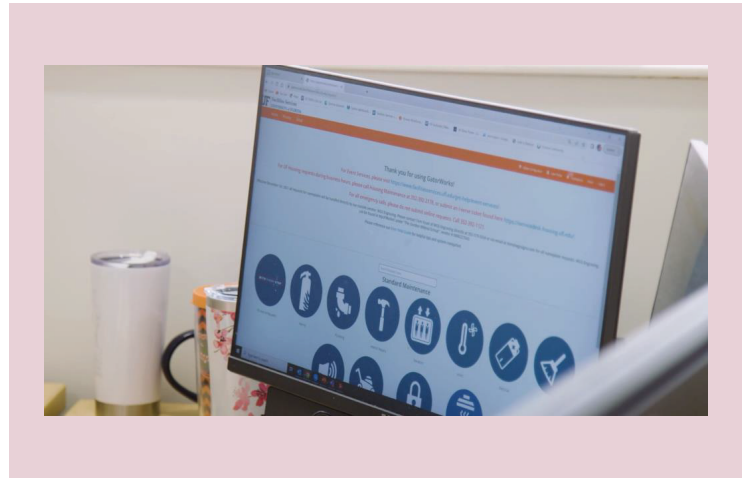
The University of Florida already had a long-standing partnership with AssetWorks. When Mark Helms, Assistant Vice President, joined UF in 2016, his prior experience in a different role had already exposed him to AssetWorks' solutions, making him familiar with the capabilities of the university's IWMS. Upon digging into the system, he realized that the University of Florida's utilization of AssetWorks' solutions did not align with his successful past experiences with the tool. Helms quickly identified a critical disconnect: the system's rich potential for operational insight was overshadowed by its predominantly financial focus. This emphasis originated from the fact that the initial implementation was led by a team of skilled finance professionals who naturally leaned towards a finance-centric approach, gradually steering the project away from its original intended product design.

The initial set-up as a financial tool *"got no feedback from any employees, [as a result], my entire leadership on the operations side were frustrated [...], they couldn't get the reports, or if they wanted to get a report, they had [to modify] the system or [alter] the system so much behind the scenes."*, added Mark. His vision extended beyond the platform being mainly seen as a financial tool; he aspired to establish a unified and comprehensive source of truth to efficiently manage all assets and operations across the university. To Helms, the current situation was akin to having a high-performance Jaguar parked in the garage while continuing to commute on a moped; UF had the high-powered tool but relied on its rudimentary components even when it didn't make for a smooth ride.



Solution: A Fresh Brand and Re-Implementation of AssetWorks' Solutions

To fully unleash the AssetWorks' suite capabilities and maximize asset management transparency, the University of Florida undertook a significant re-implementation initiative led by Helms. This extensive process involved not just the trade and administrative staff but expanded to include multiple teams campus-wide. Helms advocated for a deepened utilization of the current work order system, which he considered a pivotal component of their success, stressing, *"Let's not forget the bread-and-butter that got us here. It's our work order system and our ability to keep up with PMs and the day-to-day business that got us to the point that we can now start looking at new[er] things."* As the core functionalities of AiM were reestablished, attention shifted to leveraging the system's data and integrating it with other technologies. Mark questioned, *"How do we take what we are now learning and the data that we have stored in AssetWorks, how can we begin to filter it out to other areas? How can we relate it back to our building automation system? How can we relate it to those other technologies, PeopleSoft, whatever your ERP is. How do you bring all those together to make it a more powerful tool, not just for facilities but beyond facilities?"* This re-implementation aimed to transcend the financial aspect, fortifying the university's operational efficiency and management capabilities.



As a complementary aspect to the re-implementation, Mark Helms used this time to begin a strategic rebranding exercise for the Facilities Services team. Before Mark joined the organization, many activities managed by the facilities management function were relatively hidden behind the curtain. The team evolved from the obscurely named 'Physical Plant Division'—a perplexing, budget-heavy entity—to the more transparent and esteemed 'Facilities Services', enhancing its significance to the broader university community. Mark shared, *"We've really changed that model here [of nebulous operations]."*

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*We wanted to be forward-facing. We want the customers to know that we're here. We want them to know why we're here. That's helped with the morale of our staff because we're not hiding anymore. **We want people to understand what we're doing every day.***

Mark Helms, Assistant Vice President at **University of Florida**.



As part of the rebrand and re-implementation, the Facilities Services team wanted to push beyond a new name and uniforms. Mark adds, *"We wanted to be forward-facing. We want the customers to know that we're here. We want them to know why we're here. That's helped with the morale of our staff because we're not hiding anymore. We want people to understand what we're doing every day."* A vital component of this was ensuring the new successes of the team were felt by the greater university community. Utilizing AssetWork's ReADY Request platform, a user-friendly, integrated facilities service request solution, UF embarked on the development of a cutting-edge work order intake platform, which they branded as Gatorworks, enabling seamless data integration across divisions.

The tool's impact became far-reaching, proving to be an asset not only for facilities management but also for the entire university community, providing much-valued transparency. With this enhanced system, individuals could submit work orders more efficiently while gaining real-time visibility into their progress, status, and accompanying mechanic's notes. Mark says, *"We want people to understand what we're doing every day. So, I think it's key that [aspect of] customer connect, our Gatorworks platform that really allow[s] people to put in a work order easier, [and] allow people to see inside the system to know what we're doing."*



UF also took advantage of optimizing the fieldwork process for work orders by leveraging AssetWorks' Go Solutions. The re-implementation brought about a highly impactful change by digitizing the work order system and making it accessible through devices like iPads. Previously, staff had to rely on paper-based work orders, which proved problematic due to the risk of misplacement and human errors. Joe Penney, Maintenance Mechanic at UF's Carpenter Shop, highlighted the challenges, saying, *"After the day was over, we would come and fill out the paperwork. There were a lot of things you might miss out on or forget to put into the [work]order."* However, with the implementation and team adoption of iPads, the process became far more efficient. Staff members could now carry the work order with them at all times, easily inputting all necessary details immediately after

completing the task, ensuring no missed comments or notes. Additionally, field personnel now had handheld access to resources such as equipment drawings and operational manuals, which were historically unavailable or distributed primarily in paper form. Like many organizations, UF's Facilities Services staff had varying levels of technical skill. Some were highly experienced, and others were less comfortable working with new app functionalities. Benton adds, *"The end goal is that eventually the assets and AssetWorks are the hub for all [...] information no matter what you're trying to access, and then vice versa, being able to navigate back the other direction. So, making it easy to understand, easy to use is our top goal when we're working with the technicians and addressing any issues that they have."*

The wealth of readily available information was felt by the greater teams as well, as additional insights, such as work order intake and field technician statuses, were now tracked through AiM in a more comprehensive way. The shift towards a more integrated approach brought tangible improvements. As Karwan noted, the introduction of tailored dashboards built upon the collected data marked a significant transformation: "For me, the dashboard has been the biggest game changer because AiM is so full of information, but having a way for every department to customize how they view that information." This personalized access to data through dashboards empowered departments to harness the wealth of information within AiM, enabling a more informed and efficient approach to facilities management. Karwan highlights her team's success with the re-implementation, "for the last four years, [...], we've had a perfect inventory audit at the end of the year, which we're extremely proud of."

The Results

With the re-implementation of AssetWorks' solutions, ReADY, AiM, and Go, the UF Facilities Services teams were able to reap more benefits out of a comprehensive system.



We can provide transparency about what our goals are and where we are in meeting them."

Katie Karwan, Assistant Director of Auxiliary Support Services at **University of Florida**.



Greater Data Transparency

The game-changer for the auxiliary departments, according to Karwan, was the program's implementation of customized dashboards. These real-time dashboards provided her team with invaluable insights into their billable hours, enabling a direct comparison of their monthly progress against set targets and budget requirements. Moreover, they could easily track each technician's billed hours. Karwan emphasized how this newfound transparency fueled healthy competition and motivation among the team. *"We can provide transparency about what our goals are and where we are in meeting them,"* she stated.

The distinctiveness of her three departments was well-addressed by the dashboard's ability to tailor information for each unit, revolutionizing how they managed their operations. By highlighting essential management items and making crucial information highly visible, the customized dashboards in AiM significantly enhanced their effectiveness as managers,

leading to a more streamlined and successful approach to achieving their goals. The benefits experienced by Karwan's team transcend her direct teams to have an impact on all Facilities Services teams that utilize and use AiM data.

Data transparency at the University of Florida experienced a significant enhancement, extending its reach beyond the Facilities Services teams to facilitate transparency with other university stakeholders. This was achieved by implementing a robust suite of tools designed to capture work order details efficiently. These details were then seamlessly integrated into a comprehensive Integrated Workplace Management System (IWMS), facilitating direct data delivery to field technicians. As a result, the transparency regarding work orders became more holistic and campus-wide, completing a full circle of improved visibility and accountability.

Securing Large Amounts of Capital Funding

One of UF's most significant achievements was the utilization of AIM data to support the pursuit of crucial funding for deferred maintenance. The State of Florida distributed a substantial \$460 million across its universities, with the UF securing the lion's share at \$148 million, a standout figure that surpasses the funding of the next closest institution. According to the Facilities Services team, this achievement was facilitated in part by presenting compelling data, supporting their points, and providing undeniable evidence to back their claims. Mark adds, *"The next school got sixty million. So, we are huge players at the table, and I truly believe it's because I can give reliable data to my Board of Trustees who can then go to the Board of Governors [...] [to show] show our story."* Mark continues, *"We could back it up, and we were in a position to not be questioned. [...] So I think that speaks volumes for how our data is working."*

Benton highlighted the importance of the strides made in the asset management aspect of the system,

as it serves as the foundation for all other decisions. She stated, *"Now we really have that follow-through of information. We have a consistent way of having conversations about funding, spending and how to be good stewards of our assets across every single portion of our organization. [...] And without the data that we collect, [...] it would be very difficult to [...] have those kind of funding conversations that we need to have at the higher levels to really make informed decisions about how we manage those operations."* This newfound ability to leverage AiM data bolstered their funding efforts, facilitated more informed decision-making, and fostered responsible asset management practices throughout the organization.

The re-implementation and strategic rebranding served as the groundwork for the department's increased ability to provide accurate data and illustrate the business case for additional funding, thereby underlining their enhanced value and efficiency.

Looking forward

The UF Facilities Services team continues to build out their successes from various aspects of their re-implementation. Mark adds, *"Now, we're in a great position with AssetWorks, but we can't lose sight. It can never stop. We can never be satisfied with where we are today. Because processes change, people change, and technology changes. And so we need to make sure we stay out in front of it."*

Do you have a **complex facilities landscape** like UF?

AssetWorks gives you deep insight into your asset management data to justify funding and inform funding decisions. Contact us to speak with a member of our sales team if you would like to see similar results.

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