

Frequently Asked Questions

1) **Why should my university undertake such an effort? Is it really worth it?**

College and university physical plants are one of the most important assets of the institution. However, this is often taken for granted. Further complicating matters is that there are so many stakeholders yet so many pressures. Our research efforts help institutions focus ... to make data-driven decisions that impact resources and the physical and operational attributes of the college and university.

2) **How much does this cost me?**

It really depends on the scope and scale. Much of it depends on the size of the institution and the complexity of the organization. What's most important for us is that a process be put in place that makes this replicable every two to three years, and not necessarily by Diagnostics Plus. While we'd love to continue doing this for you, we want win-win situations. It is our experience that a comprehensive first-time effort will cost approximately \$30,000 to \$50,000, although we can scale things down to the \$20,000 to \$30,000 range.

3) **Who is Diagnostics Plus and what makes them qualified to do such an effort?**

Diagnostics Plus has been in business for nearly two decades. With twenty professionals on staff and experience with MIT and Penn State in this process, we can help other colleges and universities in their effort. Our staff has a great deal of depth working with universities and colleges. In fact, some of our staff are not only market research and assessment specialists, but they've also served in staff and faculty roles.

We also have a track record with Penn State's Office of Physical Plant that dates back to 1998.

4) **How accurate/reliable are the results?**

The findings often bring to light what is most important to stakeholders at colleges and universities. The findings often times are NOT surprising, but they identify consensus, priorities and areas of potential friction. We believe that the results are very accurate to the campus situation.

They're even more reliable when the study is repeated every few years ... to see whether the institution is making progress in the right areas.

5) **We have smart people at our university. We could probably do this ourselves. What value is added by having Diagnostics Plus on-board?**

Colleges and universities are full of smart and experienced faculty, staff and students. That's just the problem. They're so smart and so committed to making life better that often times they are just focused on their corner of campus. Diagnostics Plus has the experience to help campuses navigate a physical plant multi-stakeholder research process. We not only have the experience, but we can be more objective coming in from the outside. We also have interpretative skills and experience that will make our findings indisputable.

6) **Some of our employees are members of a union. Is that an issue of concern?**

Physical plant staff at both Penn State and MIT are part of a union. We leave the bulk of the communication to the union with the physical plant leadership. On both of our efforts, we have not had any problems as we addressed concerns before hand. In one case we used two different surveys, one for union members and one for non-union members.

7) **Our institution is small and we think we know what people want. How can you add value?**

You probably do know what your people need. However, being smaller might mean your resources are even scarcer. While the cost of doing a study may be viewed as expensive for the college or university, the institution really needs to assess what might be the risk of making a poor decision, what productivity might be lost in debating the priorities, and what the end benefit might be of having stakeholders unify around priorities that were efficiently gathered.

8) **How do you choose the sample and how do you contact them?**

Depending on what your situation is and how extensive you want your effort to be, we will make recommendations as to groups of individuals and stakeholders, as well as employees, that are critical to the process. We can also work with you to determine what a good sample size would be and with whom we should talk to minimize friction and maximize buy-in toward the effort.

In terms of how we contact folks, we've done it many ways, including in-person, telephone and the Internet. For cost-efficiency purposes, we typically leverage our information gathering via telephone interviews and Internet surveys, depending on the audience.

9) **How do you get faculty and staff to participate in a survey?**

We find this to be the easy part. We will work with the project manager or a major leader at the university to send our communication about our effort. Stakeholders; such as students, faculty, staff and others; want to help make the institution strong. We, therefore, have a high response rate to our inquiries.

10) **Will you be able to provide us with a reference or institution I can benchmark my ideas off?**

We certainly have good relationships with the two other institutions we've conducted studies for. However, as this process grows, we can certainly look for peer institutions that might be willing to share their results with you, most likely this would be in a reciprocal fashion.

11) **How long does it take to get final results?**

This really depends on the scope of the effort. A typical effort has a month of planning, followed by a month or two of data collection. We then need about a month to analyze and produce a report. So, in short, a smaller effort would get done in about 2-3 months while a larger effort might require 4-5 months.

12) **Who do I contact to get started?**

Jim Fong, who is the Vice President of Sales and Marketing at Diagnostics Plus, serves as our lead analyst to the education sector. Having two decades of experience, he is responsible for identifying research-based solutions for clients. He can be reached at 800-444-6093 ext. 225 or by e-mail jfong@diagnosticsplus.com.