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Study Shows School Cleanliness Affects Learning

Alexandria, VA - A recent national study of college students determined there is a correlation between the cleanliness of a school's facilities and students' academic achievement. Entitled *Cleanliness and Learning in Higher Education*, the study was based around the five levels of clean identified in APPA's *Custodial Staffing Guidelines for Educational Facilities* (see chart to right.)

The study was conducted through the Center for Facilities Research (CFaR) at APPA – the association promoting leadership in educational facilities – and co-sponsored ISSA, the worldwide cleaning industry association. The researchers on the project were Jeffery L. Campbell, Ph.D., chair of the Facilities Management Program at Brigham Young University and Alan S. Bigger, APPA's president and director of facilities at Earlham College.

Of the 1481 students polled, 88 percent reported that the lack of cleanliness becomes a distraction at APPA Level 3 (Casual Inattention) and Level 4 (Moderate Dinginess). Eighty-four percent reported that they desire APPA Level 1 (Orderly Spotlessness) or Level 2 (Ordinary Tidiness) standard of cleanliness to create a good learning environment.

Cleanliness ranked as the fourth most important building element to impact the students' personal learning. The top three building elements were noise, air temperature and lighting. Students also reported that most effective learning spaces are classrooms, libraries and personal study space.

Eighty percent of the students surveyed reported that they should be involved in keeping campus buildings clean. Seventy-eight

APPA's Five Levels of Clean

Level 1 – Orderly Spotlessness

- Floors and base molding shine and/or are bright and clean; colors are fresh. There is no buildup in corners or along walls.
- All vertical and horizontal surfaces have a freshly cleaned or polished appearance and have no accumulation of dust, dirt, marks, streaks, smudges or fingerprints. Lights all work and fixtures are clean.
- Washroom and shower fixtures and tile gleam and are odor-free. Supplies are adequate.
- Trash containers and pencil sharpeners hold only daily waste, are clean and odor-free.

Level 2 – Ordinary Tidiness

- Floors and base molding shine and/or are bright and clean. There is no buildup in corners or along walls. But there can be up to two days worth of dust, dirt, stains or streaks.
- All vertical and horizontal surfaces are clean, but marks, dust, smudges and fingerprints are noticeable upon close observation. Lights all work and fixtures are clean.
- Washroom and shower fixtures and tile gleam and are odor-free. Supplies are adequate.
- Trash containers and pencil sharpeners hold only daily waste, are clean and odor-free.

Level 3 – Casual Inattention

- Floors are swept or vacuumed clean, but upon close observation there can be stains. A buildup of dirt and/or floor finish in corners and along walls can be seen.
- There are dull spots and/or matted carpet in walking lanes. There are streaks or splashes on base molding.
- All vertical and horizontal surfaces have obvious dust, dirt, marks, smudges, and fingerprints. Lamps all work and fixtures are clean.
- Trash containers and pencil sharpeners hold only daily waste, are clean and odor-free.

Level 4 – Moderate Dinginess

- Floors are swept or vacuumed clean, but are dull, dingy, and stained. There is a noticeable buildup or dirt and/or floor finish in corners and along walls.
- There is a dull path and/or obviously matted carpet in the walking lanes. Base molding is dull and dingy with streaks or splashes.

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Study Shows School Cleanliness Affects Learning -Add One

percent reported that cleanliness has an impact on their health. Students reported that lack of cleanliness affects allergies, spreads germs, increases bug and rodent infestations and promotes higher stress levels.

“This study presents new knowledge to help support educational facilities professionals in providing learning spaces to students that will enhance academic achievement and protect their overall health,” said Jeffery Campbell whose facilities management students at BYU helped conduct and analyze the study.

“In this day and age when services are cut in order to save dollars, this study shows that cutting cleaning services could have a detrimental impact on our primary customers, the students,” said Alan Bigger. “Recruitment and retention are the lifeblood of institutions of higher learning. If we do not provide environments our students feel comfortable in, they may go elsewhere.”

“These findings provide a vital tool for facility service providers to reinforce the benefits of cleaning; there’s also a great deal of public-relations power in that message if an institution can use its cleaning program to inform students and their families what it is doing to protect the well-being of its population,” said John Garfinkel, ISSA Executive Director. “This study is a great addition to ISSA’s ongoing initiative to create more research behind cleaning and its positive impact on public health.”

Initially printed by 1992 and now in its second edition, APPA’s *Custodial Staffing Guidelines* includes information on such specialized facilities areas as dormitories, health care facilities, and more. Thirty-three room categories in all are covered by the APPA staffing guidelines. The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) recently revised its LEED for Existing Buildings (LEED-EB) standard, adding credits for those institutions conducting an audit of their facilities using APPA’s *Custodial Staffing Guidelines*.

The final report from *Cleanliness and Learning in Higher Education* is available free to APPA members and for \$30 for nonmembers through the bookstore at www.appa.org and free to ISSA members through the Member Lounge at www.ISSA.com and for \$30 by request to nonmembers. APPA’s *Custodial Staffing Guidelines for Educational Facilities* manual can be purchased in the APPA bookstore.

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APPA promotes leadership in educational facilities for professionals seeking to build their careers, transform their institutions, and elevate the value and recognition of facilities in education. APPA is the association of choice for more than 5,200 educational facilities professionals throughout the United States, Canada, and abroad.

Level 4 – Moderate Dinginess (cont.)

- All vertical and horizontal surfaces have conspicuous dust, dirt, marks, smudges, and fingerprints. Lamp fixtures are dirty and some lamps (up to 5% are burned out)
- Trash containers and pencil sharpeners have old trash and shavings. They are stained and marked. Trash containers smell sour.

Level 5 – Unkempt Neglect

- Floors and carpets are dull, dirty, scuffed and/or matted. There is a conspicuous buildup of old dirt and/or floor finish in corners and along walls. Base molding is dirty, stained and streaked. Gum, stains, dirt, dust balls and trash are broadcast.
- All vertical and horizontal surfaces have major accumulations of dust, dirt, smudges, and fingerprints, all of which will be difficult to remove. Lack of attention is obvious.
- Light fixtures are dirty with dust balls and flies, Many lamps (more than 5% are burned out.
- Trash containers and pencil sharpeners overflow. They are stained and marked. Trash containers smell sour.