we celebrate Earth Month as a reminder to cherish and protect our home here on earth; and more directly the lands of our state and at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. F&S is a primary caretaker of the grounds, buildings, and utilities used by more than 50,000 students and 10,000 employees.

Many responsibilities in making campus operations more sustainable are directed and implemented by teams at F&S, a few examples of which you’ll find in this edition of F&S INSIDER magazine. The goals are described in the Illinois Climate Action Plan (iCAP), the strategic document for all campus sustainability objectives across the Urbana campus. The plan is to be carbon neutral as soon as possible, and no later than 2050, and F&S is an essential partner in the ways we work toward that goal.

F&S staff are always looking for more ways to incorporate sustainability into our everyday operations, and we encourage everyone on campus to do the little things to make a difference: put trash and recyclables in their place, turn off lights and electricity when possible, use active transportation, and encourage others to do similarly. Meanwhile, collaborations with sustainability colleagues, facility liaisons, students, and administrators help us work strategically to take big steps toward meeting our climate commitments.

Keeping the earth, and by extension, our sustainability plans, at the forefront of daily work is a year-round effort.
Local Black history and the history of campus intersect in Champaign-Urbana. It’s no wonder then that several stops on the Champaign County African American Heritage Trail tell the story of both. The trail committee collaborated with the university to ensure that several of these stories are memorialized around campus.

Brent Lewis, university landscape architect, and Don Gerard, construction project coordinator, represented F&S in the planning and execution phases, offering significant support to the work. Lewis is part of the Architectural Review Committee, which vetted the sign information and layout, and helped coordinate University of Illinois branding. Lewis explained that F&S helped to facilitate placement of the various signs. For example, the sign honoring Maudelle Tanner Brown Bousfield, the first African American woman to enroll at and graduate from the university, is outside Bousfield Hall. Installation was completed by F&S laborers and cement finishers. The sign, which measures approximately 2 feet by 3 feet, is printed with the same information on the front and the reverse; it includes the trail’s logo, pictures of Bousfield, historical notes about her accomplishments, the university’s wordmark as a project partner of the sign, and a QR code that people can use to access more information about Bousfield. As part of the plan, there were detailed instructions for installing the new signs, including exact location and the engineering details that outline how the sign’s base was to be constructed so that the sign can withstand a 115 mile per hour wind.
Additional trail locations on campus include the following:

• Bruce D. Nesbitt African American Cultural Center. (Location: small interior plaque placed in BNAACC)

• Walter Thomas Bailey and Beverly Lorraine Greene, the first Black man and woman to graduate with degrees in architecture. (Location: large single-sided sign outside Temple Hoyne Buell Hall)

• Albert R. Lee was the second Black person hired by the university. He was a clerk in the Office of the President, serving under six presidents. He became the de facto dean of African American students when he became the go-to resource for Black students attending the university. (Location: second floor by the west stairwell in the Student Dining and Residential Programs Building)

• William Frank Earnest was a promising student who enlisted in the Illinois National Guard in May 1917. Sadly, he was the university’s first Black student to be killed in World War I; he is also memorialized on a column in Memorial Stadium. (Location: larger double-sided sign placed near Grange Grove)

• Project 500 was a program designed to increase minority enrollment at the university. In 1967, for example, only 59 African American undergrads were studying at the U of I. Project 500 aimed to enroll 500+ African Americans and People of Color each year. (Location: larger sign placed inside the Illini Union at the west entrance)

F&S is the operational backbone to the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, but maybe not everybody realizes this is so. When Illinois students intern at F&S, or prospective employees come in for a tour, they both figure out quickly: every part of life on campus is impacted or fully supported by F&S work.

Student employees work at F&S in a variety of fields, ranging from building maintenance, capital project management, code compliance, and utilities and energy. On the next page, for example, you’ll read about how one student employee checked braille on campus signage.

Other young people, often from nearby high schools or community colleges, may not view attending Illinois as their next professional development step, but rather see F&S and developing their skilled labor practices as their future. Academic growth is still possible, as all Illinois employees can continue their education, often at a discounted rate.

Common touring groups include students from the Parkland College Highway Construction Careers Training Program and the Education for Employment System. Those both show what work life is like at F&S and, generally, in the crafts and trades.

Greg Moen, supervisor of building craftpersons, leads some of these tours, offering advice and words of wisdom, noting that the field is made to be easy to get into. Hard work and positive relationships can help grow a successful career. Each shop can shed light on what testing is like, what skills are needed, and how ‘soft’ skills like a handshake, eye contact, and confidence are valued.

“If you work hard at getting a job, you will be successful,” Moen told Parkland students while they visited the construction laborers shop (shown below). “You can’t just apply one place and say ‘Oh, they didn’t call me back’ and hold your head down. You’ve got to work at it just like how you work at school.”
When Logan Fisher came to the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in fall 2023, he didn’t really understand what F&S did...

...now, after time as a student employee, his future career as an architect will call on the memory of positive impact he personally left to future students, faculty, and staff.

Fisher worked with coordinator of special programs in building maintenance Patrick Wood and sign shop foreperson Kevin Westray to find, detail, and, if necessary, replace incorrect braille signage. The braille checks were performed by Fisher at Everitt Laboratory, the Siebel Center for Computer Science, the Grainger Engineering Library, the Electrical and Computer Engineering Building, and Campus Instructional Facility, among others. Fisher, a first-year student in the Master of Architecture program, got to find out how details can make a crucial difference.

“It’s one of the seemingly miniscule things that I never gave any thought to as an Architecture student,” Fisher said. “The braille project has opened my eyes to how wide and complex accessibility is in the United States, and I’ve now become more sensitive to all of that when I’m designing projects in my classes.”

The project will always bring back fond memories for Fisher, and comes with a few tangible benefits to his current experience on campus, as well as his future career.

He did not attend Illinois as an undergraduate, so Fisher found value in the work to discover parts of campus that would otherwise go unvisited. And knowing braille may give Fisher an advantage in the job market, too, as he considers himself “proficient” at reading it; many advocates for the blind worry about falling braille literacy in the U.S.

Westray was glad to have Fisher complete some of the work, and also believes the experience will help him understand all the details that go into a building.

“This project started about a year ago when it was brought to our attention by braille reading students that some of the braille was incorrect in a few buildings,” Westray said. “We produced a plan to do an assessment and fix the problem. We hired students to go through the buildings with cheat sheets and catalog all the signage that was incorrect or did not meet the current Americans with Disabilities Act standards. It has been a long process, but we have recently started to replace the signage in the buildings that have been assessed.”

Fisher will finish his time at F&S in a positive light: “I’ve had the chance to participate in a wide variety of projects and experiences that have and will positively impact my future.”

Read about Logan’s experience, and three others from his cohort, here:
F&S Utilities & Energy Services (UES) performs some of the most important work on campus, producing and distributing steam, water, and electricity across 24M gross square feet, more than 600 buildings, and to a ‘town’ of more than 50,000 students and 10,000 employees.

So, when building experts and facility managers perform renovations, retrocommissioning, or other work that reduces energy consumption, recognition is in order!

The Energy Conservation Incentive Program (ECIP) awards shine a light on individual buildings and actions taken that help the larger campus community hit goals laid out in the Illinois Climate Action Plan (iCAP).

The iCAP is the strategic plan for how this campus will meet our Climate Leadership Commitments—to be carbon neutral as soon as possible and to build resilience with our local community. The energy conservation goals in the iCAP 2020 include one of particular interest to units: “Reduce the total annual energy consumption of each college-level unit by at least 20% from an FY15 baseline by FY35.”

The ECIP awards this year honored winners from the past two years.

**2022**

**Occupant Action Category**
1st  Beilfieldt Athletic Admin. Building
2nd  State Farm Center

**Energy Advancement Category**
1st  ACES Library, Info. & Alumni Center
2nd  Natural Resources Studies Center
3rd  Illinois Sustainable Technology Center
4th  Henry Administration Building

**2023**

**Occupant Action Category**
1st  Florida Avenue Residence Hall

**Energy Advancement Category**
1st  Children’s Research Center
2nd  Grainger Engineering Library
3rd  Stock Pavilion
4th  Beckman Institute

Lifetime Achievement Award: Kent Reifsteck

After each of the winners were named, Rob Roman, director of UES, honored his predecessor Kent Reifsteck, who helped kick-start many energy savings programs at F&S, including the ECIP Awards. Reifsteck received the ECIP lifetime achievement award for innovation and leadership in energy efficiency at Illinois. Roman estimated that Reifsteck’s programs had helped avoid more than $300M in energy costs throughout his tenure.

“The thing I think is very apparent is the team that is here is doing the good work. That’s the best: get the right people together that have the desire to do the right thing on their own, and give them the resources they need and they do it,” Reifsteck said. “I forgot how big some of these savings numbers are but it’s really impressive.”

University-owned buildings of 10,000 square feet or more on the Urbana campus are automatically entered in the program each year. Previously winning buildings are eligible to win again, and there are often repeat winners.

Buildings compete in one of two categories: occupant action and energy advancement. Four winners are chosen from each category. Occupant action includes things that building users can initiate themselves to collectively reduce energy use, such as building and operation improvement projects, turning off lights when they leave a room, and other energy efficiency measures. Energy advancement includes energy conservation improvements to the building itself, such as optimizing heating and air conditioning systems and controls.

Learn More
Abbott Power Plant Primer

Facts, figures, numbers, and details about how F&S powers the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

Abbott is a one-of-its-kind cogeneration facility, meaning it simultaneously produces two important utilities: steam and electricity. Both are fed to the rest of campus via a series of underground tunnels and pipes.

Abbott uses natural gas, coal, and fuel oil, flexing between sources to manage energy market financial risks, unavailability, or increased campus energy demands to meet the need for uninterrupted service.

Fuels are used to turn kinetic energy into electrical energy through giant turbines; the leftover, or ‘waste heat,’ generated from this process is the steam sent to heat campus. Utilizing combined heat and power’ technology makes Abbott twice as efficient as a conventional power plant.

Emissions reduction equipment and standards at Abbott have allowed it to hit the following benchmarks:

- Reduces carbon dioxide emissions by 100,000 tons per year, equivalent to taking 18,000 cars off the road
- Cuts nitrogen oxide emissions by more than 500 tons per year
- Removes more than 90% of the sulfur dioxide from coal that’s burned
- Mercury levels are almost non-detectable and a fraction of the proposed limits by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Abbott meets or exceeds all EPA emission standards by removing 90% of all air pollutants. One scientific research project from the Prairie Research Institute and funded by the Department of Energy has included building a more efficient CO2 capture system, even when using different fuel sources.
The Public Functions team manages work orders to deliver and setup what is needed during the many, during the many small convocations taking place in auditoriums across campus. These include Smith Memorial Hall, Foellinger Auditorium, Lincoln Hall, the Activities & Recreation Center (ARC), and even off-campus at the Virginia Theater in downtown Champaign.

“This is like the last hurrah for everybody on the public functions team for graduation and convocations,” said Paul Jensen, public functions events coordinator. “It’s all just scheduling and figuring out numbers of what we have and need. We rely heavily on all the other crafts and trades at F&S. There’s not a better place to work at, considering the support we get from them.”

The primary request is typically for delivery of chairs, re-setting those chairs after each event, and even cleaning restrooms or other public areas frequented by graduates and their friends and families. Some buildings require the use of the sound team to ensure microphones and speakers work correctly, while one from this spring held at the ARC needed a full stage built inside. Jensen noted this period around graduation and convocations brings some change, while other parts of his work stay the same. He’s been with F&S for 11 years. For example, the ARC space has essentially replaced what was done previously at Huff Hall, where there is no air conditioning — if warm weather hits in May, the space can become uncomfortable.

“Really, the only things that change are the venues,” Jensen said. “There used to be more going around to different buildings, and receptions at different places. The graduating classes either get bigger or smaller and get moved to other places.”

The Public Functions team helps set the stage for when students receive their diplomas and celebrate during Commencement. F&S will be there until the very end.
Front Cover: 0007760.tif, Commencement From the Bleachers, June 12, 1949. Found in RS 39/2/20, Box 122, Folder EVE-1, 1949. The copyright holder for this image is the University of Illinois.