In the wake of historic budget cuts, the U of M was challenged with cleaning the same amount of space with 52 fewer people (10% of its cleaning staff). The University’s Facilities Management Department answered the challenge by adopting green team cleaning.

This creative solution involved shifting from the previous “area” model where a single custodian is responsible for all tasks within a given space, to a team approach. In the team model, tasks are divided amongst specialists who concentrate on fewer responsibilities. Specialization frees janitors from making multiple trips to a custodial closet for different pieces of equipment which allows more time to clean. The team approach also reduces the overall amount of equipment because each custodian no longer needs to be outfitted with every single piece.

While team size varies, the typical squad is comprised of four technicians whose roles include:

- **Point Technician** – first to arrive, checks for unusual conditions, empties trash & recycling, cleans marker boards, dusts, spot cleans surfaces & walls
- **Vacuum Technician** – vacuums hard floors & carpets, replaces seating as required
- **Restroom Technician** – cleans all restroom fixtures, floors & walls
- **Utility Technician** – final squad member in space, removes large debris, changes light bulbs, cleans stairs & entryways, cleans elevators, uses riding equipment, inventories supplies & communicates squad successes/challenges to supervisor

**Advantages**

The new model benefits students, faculty, staff and FM’s custodians because it is healthier, increases consistency, requires less equipment, improves both safety and accountability all while reducing costs.

**Go Green**

Teams are now only using six chemicals for daily University cleaning, four of which are green seal approved. This means fewer chemical interactions, fewer containers and more environmentally sensitive products. Green team cleaning stresses cleaning for health and hygiene first and appearances second.

**Benefits**

**Green Approach**

Green Team Cleaning is healthier for building occupants, employees and the planet.

**Consistent Coverage**

Team members share and are familiar with an area, work according to a step down plan to account for absences and utilize one system for doing the job, ensuring consistent coverage in all areas.

**Less Equipment**

Equipment costs are lower, as not every team member needs each piece of equipment.

**Safety and Accountability**

Team members are not left alone for long periods of time in case of medical emergency and more eyes on the space helps ensure cleaning is done right.

**Cost Effective**

Fewer people and less equipment are needed to cover the same amount of space, allowing FM’s smaller work force to manage campus cleaning.

**Bottom Line**

Total Annual Savings $3,100,000
Teams have been trained in hygienic cleaning techniques and employ microfiber cloths and dual chambered buckets. Microfiber attracts dust/debris. Each cloth is used in one room and then laundered daily. Gone are the days when a single chamber of cleaning solution was used on multiple floors and one mop head was used for months at a time. These new techniques and products will lead to improved indoor air quality. FM worked with the Department of Environmental Health and Safety to establish baseline air samples that will be measured on a quarterly basis.

**Consistency is King**

Team cleaning ensures that more than one person is familiar with a cleaning area and the specific customer needs within them. This means when a crew member is gone, customers won’t know the difference. Under the old system, service delivery often suffered during employee vacations. Currently, FM averages 13% staff missing on any given day. The team cleaning model offers a predictable, prioritized step down procedure if there aren’t enough crew members to complete all tasks. Team members have all received training and adopted a cleaning system that is consistent throughout campus. Under the old model there were 477 individual methods for cleaning the University.

**Less Equipment = Lower Costs**

Because custodians perform specialized tasks, equipment can be shared by a team. Instead of each person needing a vacuum, mop bucket, tool caddy and chemicals stored in an individual closet, one set is used by four people.

**Safe & Accountable**

Working as a team means that if a custodian suffers a medical emergency or encounters a dangerous situation they won’t be alone for long periods of time like the old system. Besides increased safety, team members bring another set of eyes to ensure all tasks are completed.

**Controlling Costs**

Team cleaning production rates are higher than individual cleaning, which means fewer people can clean a larger area. Facing historic funding cuts, FM reduced 52 positions by transitioning to Green Team Cleaning. The move saved $3.1 million without a significant drop in service and required no involuntary layoffs.

As part of its transition to Green Team Cleaning, Facilities Management invested in new equipment to improve overall performance. Backpack vacuums optimize this investment by more than doubling the amount of space a custodian can cover during a shift.

With a backpack vacuum, custodial workers can continually move throughout a space and expend less energy than an upright to perform the same task. The coverage is further increased by being able to use the vacuum’s floor attachment on both hard surface and carpeted floors without having to stop and make adjustments.

Besides being faster the backpack vacuum is also ergonomically easier on the body. Instead of bending at the waist as is required by an upright vacuum, the backpack’s wand is extended so the custodian’s back remains in a “neutral” position. Like a backpack used for camping, the weight is carried on the hips using the body’s strongest muscles.

FM’s Safety Department conducted comparative testing of the backpack versus upright vacuum models and found that backpacks were quieter, had lighter handle weights and required seven to 10 times less force to operate. Each of these considerations make backpacks safer for FM employees to operate than upright vacuums.

Backpack vacuums allow FM to clean more space safely and efficiently.