



American
Cooperative School
of Tunis
SINCE 1959

AMERICAN COOPERATIVE SCHOOL OF TUNIS

MASTER PLAN AND FEASIBILITY STUDY

MARCH 2022

smithsinnett
ARCHITECTURE

ce²ENGINEERING
Construction Energy & Environment

AUDIT

In our audit, we analyzed the existing campus master plan and original user surveys. Much of the feedback for the original community engagement sessions remained similar to our survey results and engagement feedback. Some of this vital information included the following goals for redevelopment of the campus:

- The incorporation of green space into the building design
- Keeping the ground level reserved for community spaces
- Taking into account summer and winter conditions while circumnavigating campus
- Address prevailing winds and wind-tunnel effect in the design
- Organize the campus around a central courtyard that serves as the main thoroughfare between buildings and common areas that foster connections between the grade levels
- Develop sustainability into building practices by incorporating solar energy, water conservation and recycling practices; design and incorporate natural daylight & ventilation into classrooms.
- Maximize the footprint with rooftop gardens and sporting areas
- Understanding that any new development must contain mitigating factors for flooding, wind tunnel effect and transit-conditions
- The building schedule must accommodate and mitigate academic disruption

The previous master planning massing diagram was characterized by several separate buildings that did not allow for contiguous pedestrian movement throughout the campus. While there was consideration given to exterior learning areas, they remained small and less than optimal. By saving some existing structures, the plan hampered the potential flow of movement throughout the campus. It was also noted that the football pitch is quite a precious school and community commodity, and if at all possible, should be retained in its entirety.

Therefore, with careful consideration of ACST's core values, vision and mission, our team began to take a fresh look at a new campus master plan. On the pages that follow, you will see this process unfold, with new survey results, three campus massing diagrams and recommendations for moving forward.

SURVEY DATA

In collaboration with ACST and in preparation for community engagement, the design team developed a series of survey questions for parents, faculty, and students. The goal of the survey was to discover the significant merits each group finds in the ACST facilities, as well as areas requiring additional attention. ACST distributed these survey questions in December and all user groups responded by mid-January 2022. The questions were as follows:

Faculty

- *What are the core strengths of ACST's educational program?*
- *What classroom and indoor spaces most successfully support your teaching and why?*
- *What outside spaces most successfully support your teaching and why?*
- *What indoor and classroom spaces least support your teaching and why?*
- *What outside spaces least support your teaching and why?*
- *What is one thing you would change about the existing campus?*
- *What new spaces could be built to further support student learning and why?*
- *Please note 3 strengths of the existing campus.*
- *Please note 3 weaknesses of the existing campus.*
- *Please feel free to share any other thoughts/recommendations you have about future facilities projects at ACST.*

Parent

- *What are the core strengths of ACST's educational program?*
- *What interior spaces does your child enjoy?*
- *What outdoor spaces does your child enjoy?*
- *What is one thing you would change about the existing campus?*
- *What new developments could be made that would further support your child's educational experience?*
- *Please feel free to share any other thoughts/recommendations you have about future facilities projects at ACST.*

Student

- *What are the strongest parts of ACST's educational program?*
- *What indoor and classroom spaces most successfully support your learning and why?*
- *What outside spaces most successfully support your learning and why?*
- *What indoor and classroom spaces least support your learning and why?*
- *What is one thing you would change about the campus?*
- *What could be built that would support your learning more effectively and why?*
- *Please note three things you enjoy about the campus.*
- *Please note three challenges you find on campus.*

The questions were designed to bring some understanding as to the present perception regarding the campus, as well as the attributes each user group finds of value in their school community.

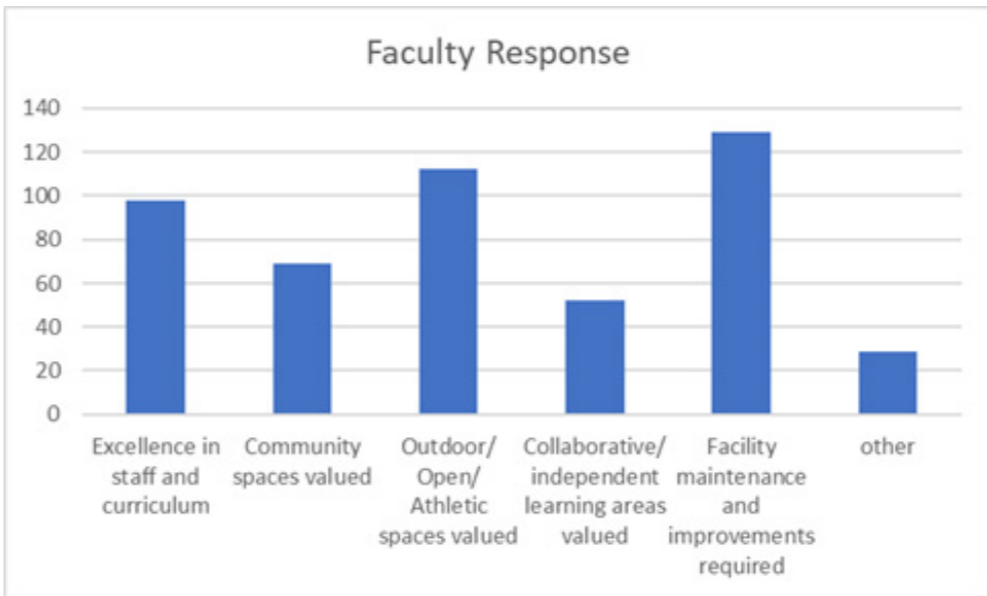
After review of each group of responses, there were a few broad thematic topics that emerged. All user groups expressed a need for unprogrammed community spaces, as well as open/athletic spaces and unprogrammed learning spaces for collaboration and independent study. There were also general construction and condition comments on the existing facility, which included comments regarding specific finishes and systems, as well as general campus planning and wayfinding.

The graphs below represent each user groups response as they correspond to the thematic topics that emerged. It's worth noting that some responses touched on multiple themes and are therefore represented more than once in the charts below. As an example, one faculty response to the question: "What new spaces could be built to further support student learning and why?" was as follows:

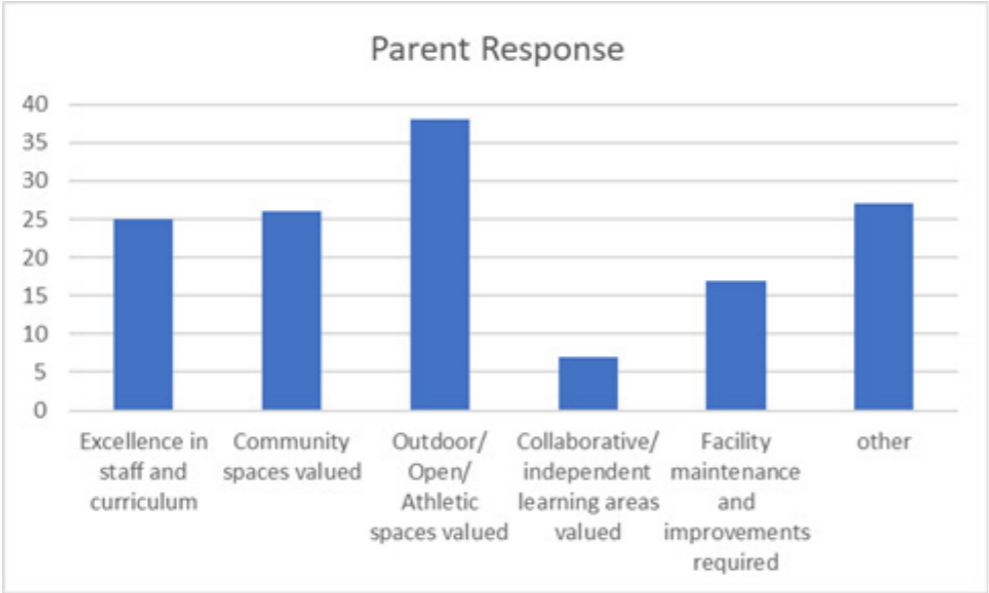
"Placing communal spaces that get used by the whole school centrally allows for greater collaboration, opportunities for resource sharing, and safety. Though I understand the challenges with our current layout, I think this should be strongly considered."

Ideas of community space, collaborative space, and challenges with the existing campus are addressed in the response and is therefore represented in each of those categories.

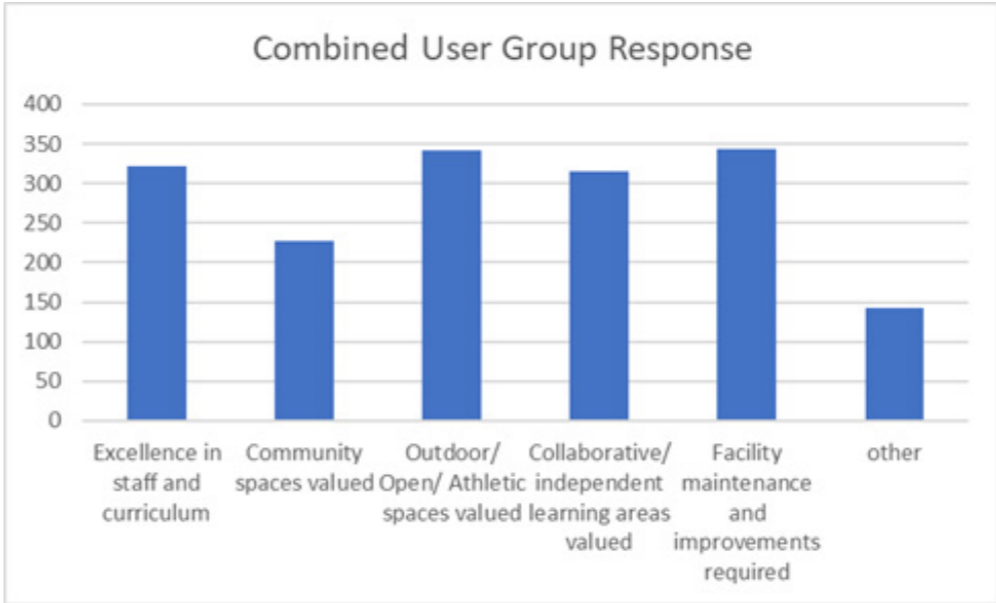
The graph of the faculty response as it relates to these topics is as below:



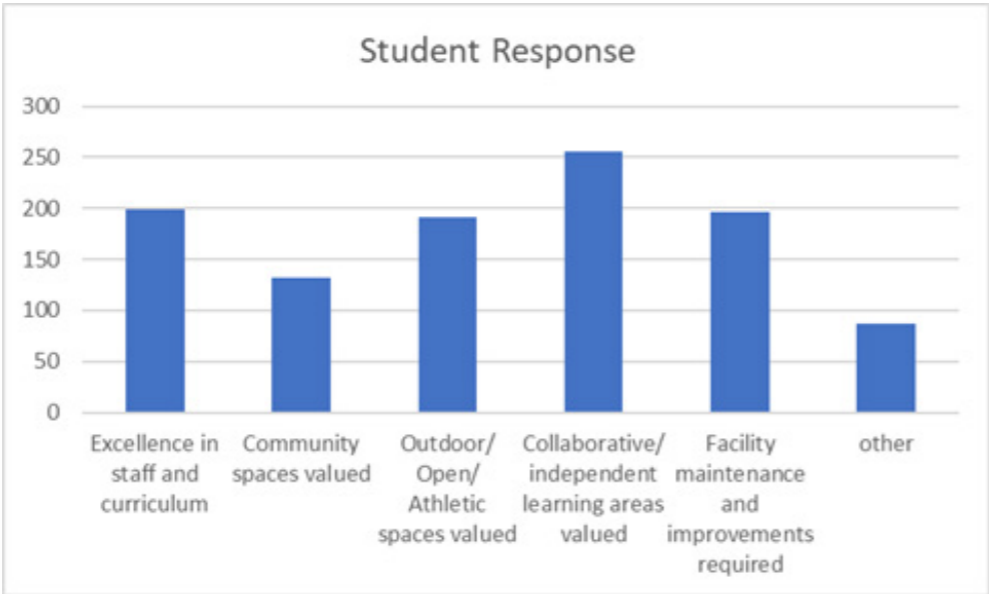
Parent responses followed in a similar pattern, except for noted issues with the construction and physical state of the campus (Facility and Maintenance Improvement bar).



A combined user group response is below. A strong desire for unprogrammed instructional spaces for collaboration and independent learning was expressed, as well as general facility upgrades and more open exterior space for sports and general socializing.



Student responses tended to put an emphasis on unprogrammed instructional spaces for collaboration and independent learning; this group captured spaces described as everything from small quiet study rooms for individual learning to larger study halls with dedicated resources and maker spaces.

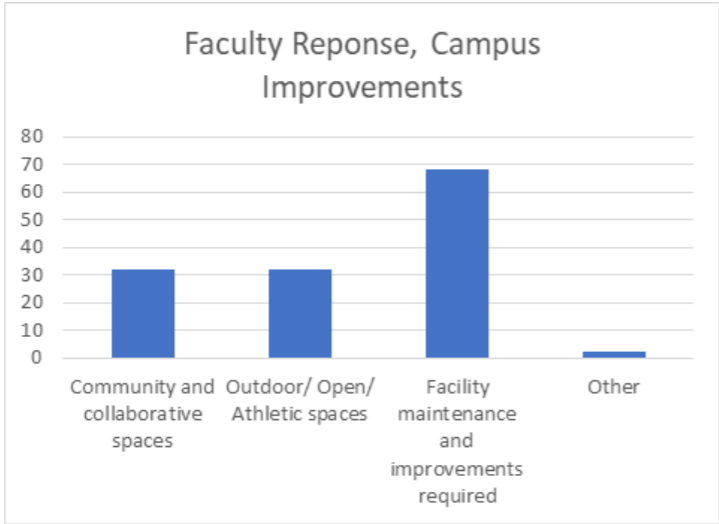


All three sets of survey questions contained two undirected and indeterminant questions regarding what all groups would like to change in the present campus, as well as what new attribute each group would like to see in a new facility; an example from the student survey below:

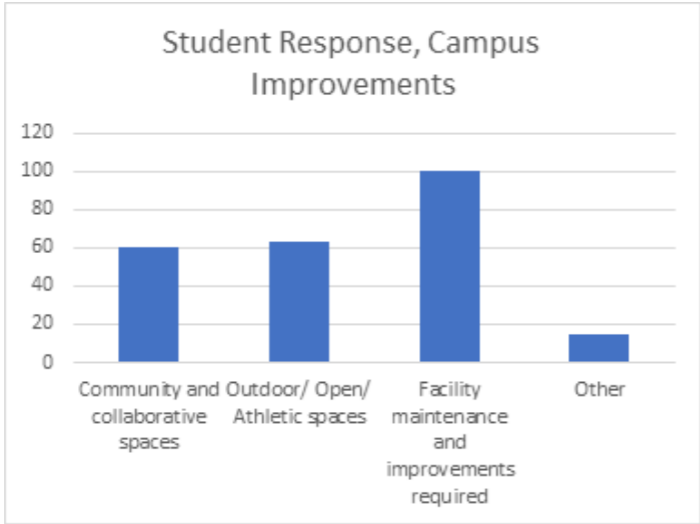
- *What is one thing you would change about the campus?*
- *What could be built that would support your learning more effectively and why?*

With regards to campus improvements, these questions are the most open ended and aspirational of the group. It is useful to look at these responses as a subset of the overall.

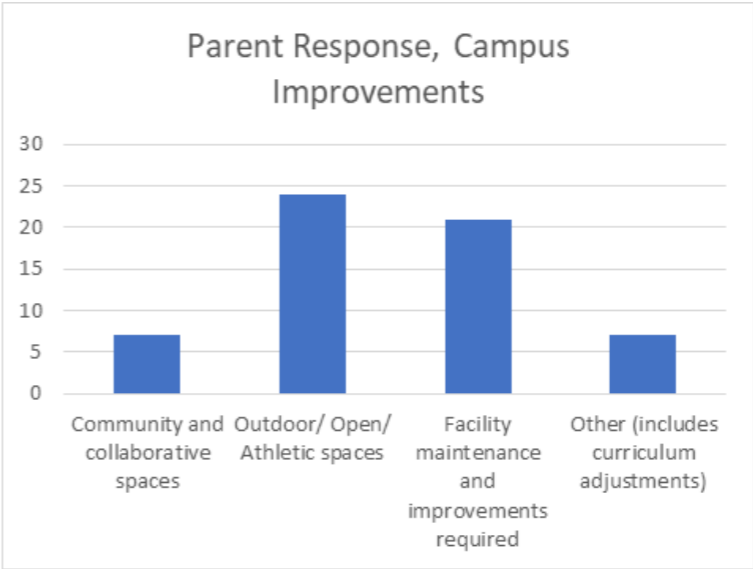
The graph of the faculty response as it relates to these topics is as below:



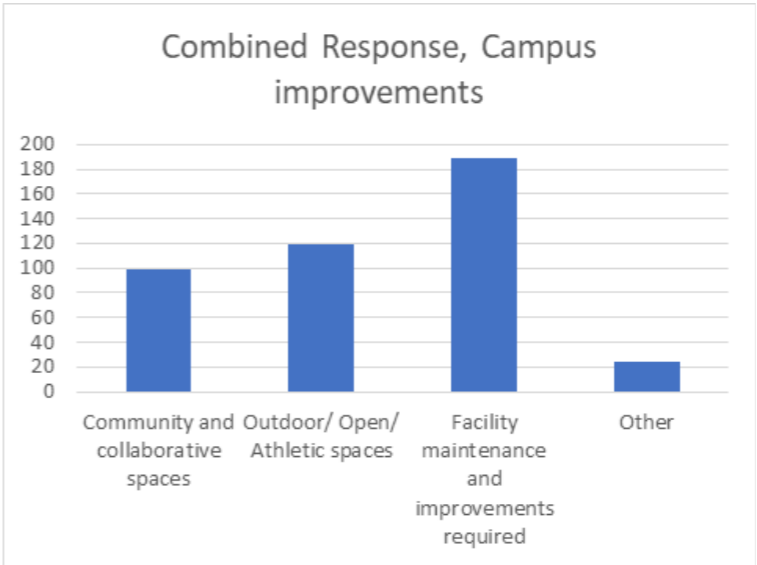
It is interesting to note that, as everyday users familiar with the existing campus buildings, physical improvements of the facilities were prioritized. These responses ranged in comment from general campus planning to specific material deficiencies. This also applied to the student group as day-to-day users; student response below (almost identical curve to faculty).



Parents responded with some apparent knowledge of facility conditions; however they were more likely to express a desire for outdoor spaces for athletics and recreation.



A combined user group response is as below. It largely skews to the faculty and student response tables due to the actual number of parent responses (28 total vs. 188 total faculty and student responses).



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In collaboration with ACST, four community engagement meetings were held for faculty, students, parents and school board members to present and discuss the renovation and improvement options for the school.

In preparation for these forums, it was decided the best way to encourage discussion was to provide a series of graphics in the form of possible space layouts overlayed on the site plan. For clarity, 3d massings were also provided to give a sense of volume. In these meetings the design team presented to the audience two different conceptual schemes after which the audience was organized into discussion groups to review likes and dislikes about each scheme. The following questions were provided to guide discussion and evaluation of these proposed options.

The questions were as follows:

1. What are your thoughts on the location of the library?
2. What are your thoughts on the location of the Classroom Wings?
3. What are your thoughts on the best locations for Interior and Exterior Learning Commons spaces?
4. What are your thoughts on the flow of each Campus Master Plan?
5. What's one thing you would change in Option 1?
6. What's one thing that you think is successful in Option 1?
7. What's one thing you would change in Option 2?
8. What's one thing that you think is successful in Option 2
9. Feel free to share any other thoughts

This discussion led to the following prevailing feedback:

- Preference for a central location of the cafeteria close to the elementary school
- Preference for a central location of the Learning Center / Library
- Appreciation for the variety and abundance of the outdoor spaces proposed for exterior common areas and outdoor learning spaces
- Many of the participants showed Interest and enthusiasm for the hybrid Central Common space/ Learning center (Library) proposed in scheme 2, they asked for its development while assuring that quiet study spaces would be provided as well.
- Covered hallways, connectors between all components of the school
- Physically separate/differentiate the high school and the middle school.
- Majority of the participants appreciate that the new designs proposed do not encroach on the football pitch and preserve it for the outdoor athletic activities.



