

THE SEED SOWER

OU Facilities Management Quarterly Newsletter



Message from the AVP

Spring Break has concluded, and we are now entering the final stretch of the Spring 2026 semester—a time when our campus truly comes to life. As trees and flowers begin to bloom, thanks to the exceptional work of our Landscaping team, and students look ahead to summer opportunities, the energy across campus is unmistakable. These moments remind us of the role we play in shaping not just the physical environment, but the experience of everyone who learns, works, and visits here.

The weeks ahead will bring several high-profile events that showcase our campus and our capabilities. The return of the Spring Football Game will once again welcome Sooner Nation back to the Palace, and in early May, Norman will host Luke Combs for what promises to be a memorable night of music. Each of these events reflects the trust placed in Facilities Management to deliver excellence behind the scenes—and I am confident, as always, that we will rise to the occasion.

I also want to pause and express my sincere appreciation to everyone who worked tirelessly during January's winter storm. Whether through long hours in difficult conditions or the quiet coordination that keeps operations running smoothly, your dedication ensured continuity and safety during a critical time. That kind of commitment speaks volumes about who we are as a team and embodies the very best of Facilities Management.

As the seasons change, so does the nature of our work—but our shared commitment to excellence, service, and one another remains constant. Thank you for the pride you bring to your roles each day and for supporting your teammates through every challenge. I am grateful to serve alongside such a dedicated, resilient, and mission-driven team.

Matthew C. Rom
Associate Vice President for Facilities Management

UPCOMING DATES

SPRING FOOTBALL GAME
April 18

STAFF WEEK
April 20-24

STAFF AWARDS CEREMONY
April 21, 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM
OMU Ballroom

FINALS WEEK
May 11-15

COMMENCEMENT WEEKEND
May 15-27

MEMORIAL DAY
May 25

JUNETEENTH
June 19

BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR:

FM Digital Display Boards!!!

Safety BBQ - Date TBD

Have an idea for the next quarterly newsletter? Email Facilities@ou.edu with your idea!

FEATURED TEAM MEMBERS

NEW HIRES

FACILITY SERVICES

Alexa Roden – 2/9/26
Mackenzie Jackson – 3/9/26

CUSTODIAL

Dana Benally – 1/4/26
Dustin Gadbow – 1/4/26
Austin Voorhees – 1/4/26
Sircreener Davis – 1/4/26
Victoria Blackburn – 1/4/26
Shafner Baker – 2/23/26
Lucas Graves – 3/8/26
Miguel Franklin – 3/9/26

MAINTENANCE

Darrell Ferguson: Electric – 3/9/26
Wesley Jones: Lock – 3/9/26
Chris Lamb: Paint – 3/9/26

LANDSCAPING/GROUNDS

Aaron Tietz – 3/9/26
Logan Wint – 3/9/26
Luke Jardina – 3/23/26
Lauren May – 3/23/26
Mason Whiteskunk – 3/23/26
Abdulrahman Khalil Soufan – 3/23/26
Said Al Gheilani – 3/23/26
Gustavo Pedulla – 3/23/26
Brody Luig – 3/23/26
Farzana Tasnim – 3/23/26

UTILITIES

Riley Heck – 1/20/26
Jude Savage – 1/20/26
Robert Cox – 2/23/26
Kristopher McDaniel – 2/23/26
John Sanders – 3/9/26



TEAM SPOTLIGHT!

BUSINESS OPERATIONS TEAM

Terry Coltharp, Sophia Hacker, Joseph Martin, and Sarah Hartford

This past quarter, the Facilities Management Business Operations team completed the migration of AiM to a new hosting environment and supported a system-wide upgrade—both requiring extensive behind-the-scenes work.

The transition brought challenges, including broken PowerBI links and system issues, all of which the team tackled head-on. Through close collaboration with AssetWorks and FM teams, they worked to resolve issues and keep operations running smoothly.

At the same time, they've continued rolling out new AiM WorkDesks, training new hires, and providing ongoing support. Their dedication, technical expertise, and persistence have been critical during this complex transition.

MILESTONE ANNIVERSARIES

1 YEAR

Troy Riley	1/2
Sarah Hartford	1/13
Matthew Jewell	1/13
Jennifer Fuentes	1/13
Quinton Hukill	1/17
Dillon McCoy	1/27
Zane Timmerman	2/3
Bradley Dixon	2/10
Mason Mitchell	2/24
Billy Jackson	3/10
Alyssa Williamson	3/10
Kyle Tompkins	3/23
Jarrold Ethridge	3/24

5 YEARS

Korey Wheeler	3/1
Jeremy Debaets	3/20
Joseph Bivens	3/20
Craig Carley	3/20
Marcus Perry	3/20
Johnny Pitts	3/20
Manolo Ramirez Figueroa	3/20
Cody Rezac	3/20
Gerick Smyth	3/20
Richard Steely	3/20
Travis Sutterfield	3/20
Kenneth Tramel	3/20
Justin Tripp	3/20
Michael Zedeker	3/20

10 YEARS

Melinda Clark	1/11
Jim Payne	2/22

15 YEARS

Curtis Davis	3/12
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20 YEARS

Michael Ray	1/3
Austin Roesler	3/13
Jason Reeves	3/28

30 YEARS

Christopher Walsh	1/20
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QUARTER 1 AWARD WINNERS

Q1



CALEB BLAKELY MAINTENANCE

CALEB WORKS FOR THE PLUMBING SHOP AND HAS WORKED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA FOR 10 YEARS

“

Caleb has played a key role in positioning the Plumbing Shop to operate at its best. His leadership in this area not only benefits Facilities Management but also enhances the quality of service provided to the University of Oklahoma and its community.

”

Q1



JEFFREY JONES UTILITIES

JEFF WORKS FOR THE PLANT MAINTENANCE TEAM. JEFF HAS WORKED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA FOR 6 MONTHS.

“

Jeff has gone above and beyond with his willingness to take on any job and stay with it until completion. He has stayed late on multiple occasions voluntarily to complete outages in uncomfortable locations and to come in the next morning with his normal positive attitude to face the days events.

”

Q1



WILLIE FINLEY CUSTODIAL

WILLIE IS A CUSTODIAN AND HE HAS WORKED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA FOR 22 YEARS.

“

Willie has been seen going above and beyond the normal day to day tasks of a custodian. He demonstrates teamwork and reliability often on our team with his efforts to help with covering other buildings alongside other members of our team.

”

Q1



ANDREW TUCCI LANDSCAPE

ANDREW WORKS FOR LANDSCAPE SERVICES. HE HAS WORKED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA FOR 18 YEARS.

“

Andrew has demonstrated outstanding leadership by guiding his crew with professionalism, accountability, and a strong team-first mindset. His crew consistently stepped in to support every zone whenever asked, showing flexibility, reliability, and a genuine commitment to the success of the entire operation.

”

Q1



DEDE BRANNON SUPERVISOR

DEDE WORKS FOR CUSTODIAL SERVICES. SHE HAS WORKED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA FOR 37 YEARS.

“

DeDe has always been a helpful and supportive ally. She consistently shares her experience and wisdom with me whenever I have doubts or need clarification—and even when I just need a moment to laugh and refocus. Her encouragement, insight, and authenticity in every interaction make a real difference. What stands out most this quarter is the way DeDe led her team through the loss of one of their members, Maria. I witnessed her handle this with kindness, honesty, and availability. The most remarkable part is that DeDe doesn't even realize the impact she made. She led by example—teaching her team how to honor a friend while continuing to move forward.

”

KUDOS KORNER

ACCESS CONTROL TEAM ADDRESSING ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES.

“I’d like to extend some high praise to Dominick Potter for his help resolving this ADA issue, as well as several other recent access challenges in our building. As the on-site access coordinator for my department for the past 15 years, I’ve greatly appreciated his clear communication, persistence in troubleshooting, willingness to work toward affordable lasting solutions, and his consistent follow-through. His work has made felt meaningful improvements in our school which relies heavily on these systems”

SNOW REMOVAL AT THE AIRPORT AND ON CAMPUS.

“This morning, I received a phone call from a citizen visiting the airport and north campus area. The individual expressed sincere appreciation for the outstanding work being performed on snow and ice removal. They specifically noted how impressed they were with the diligence and effectiveness of the efforts to keep the roads and parking lots clear and accessible”

STEAMPIPE BREAK AT THE SFC.

I wanted to let you know how grateful I am for the FM crew. Throughout the fix, Justin’s communication was absolutely outstanding. Team Chris (the two Chrises in plumbing) have been most helpful with that project when we first found it as well as with some other issues we have had with our showers. I saw FM at work in a tough situation with a massive fix, a harsh environment with the heat and humidity, yet, dedicated to getting services back up for the SFC as quickly as possible. Thank you to the FM team for the care they show for campus, and supporting what we do on campus for students, each and every day!

FM TEAMS MAINTAINING CAMPUS DURING THE JANUARY WINTER STORM.

“I wanted to take a moment to give you all a big thank you for all the hard work across campus making the sidewalks clear and getting us back on campus. I know it doesn't get said enough, so I want to shout it extra loud. THANK YOU! I hope your day is filled with more sunshine and kindness than complaints. Have a great day”

REPAINTING OF THE POLITICAL SCIENCE OFFICE

Dear Facilities Management,
On behalf of the Department of Political Science faculty, students, and staff, thank you for the wonderful paint job completed in 205 and 205C DAHT. It looks awesome! It has really changed the look and feel of the main office.”

A BIG THANK YOU!

Dear facilities management,

I deeply appreciate your efforts at

OU. Throughout my time in CAC, I have been positively impacted by your hardwork and dedication to our events. From our beautiful campus to our amazing facilities that we host events in, yall have made my experience at OU so incredibly special. Thank you so much!

-Taryn Leigh Cox, Junior

Dear Facilities Management Member,

Thank you for all your hardwork and contributions you bring to our campus. You and your team keep our "home" away from home in the best condition!

Whether it be indoors or outdoors, you ensure we have the best experience!

Have a happy holiday season!

Best,

Amada Rosette, Class of 2026

Dear Staff,

I wanted to write to thank you for all of the work & effort you put into making our campus beautiful! It is seen and appreciated it does not go unseen. Thank you so much.

- Ally Forbes

Dear FM Team,

I just wanted to say thank you so much for always being such a support system for Campus Activities Council! Last year I served as Film Series chair, and was so appreciative of how you all ensured we were able to hold our Spring Film Festival on the Oval! From something as small as ensuring the sprinklers were off for the evening, you all truly helped ensure the night was so special! Your hard work doesn't go unnoticed and I am so thankful for everything!

Best,

Brian Bartz
CAC Executive Vice (Name)

Dear staff,

Thank you for all the hard work and extra hours you put in that people don't see! You keep our campus beautiful and have an impact that does not go unnoticed.

best,

Elian Santana

MOMENTS WORTH CELEBRATING

CONGRATULATIONS, RETIREES!



JIM OLIVER
LANDSCAPE

Jim Oliver is retiring after 27 years with Facilities Management, where he was a big part of the Landscape team. Over the years, he helped take care of the north campus in ways that really made a difference, with the Max Westheimer Airport always being one of his favorite spots. His dedication and consistency haven't gone unnoticed, and he'll definitely be missed. We're so thankful for his years of service and wish him all the best in retirement!



WILLIE FINLEY
CUSTODIAL

"After 22 years of dedicated service, Willie Finley is retiring from Custodial Services. Willie brought tremendous pride and energy to his work, especially during his many years supporting the stadium and athletics facilities. He leaves with great appreciation for the relationships he built and the teamwork he experienced here. We thank Willie for his commitment to OU and wish him all the best as he enjoys a well-earned retirement." - Corey Sauser, Director of Custodial Services

FACILITIES WINS!

Lighting Up Campus with Efficiency

Facilities Management recently completed lighting upgrades in Burton Hall and Robertson Hall, converting existing fluorescent lamps to energy-efficient LED lighting. Across both projects, more than 1,100 lamps were retrofitted, resulting in a reduction of over 18,000 watts of installed lighting load. These improvements enhance lighting quality while lowering energy consumption and long-term maintenance needs—supporting OU's ongoing commitment to efficiency, sustainability, and improved campus environments.



Pictured Above: Burton Hall

MOMENTS WORTH CELEBRATING

FACILITIES WINS!

Smart Energy Savings Over Winter Break

During winter break, Facilities Management implemented targeted HVAC energy conservation measures across more than 2.4 million square feet in 40 E&G buildings on campus. These proactive adjustments resulted in the avoidance of over \$250,000 in unnecessary utility expenses, contributing to a decrease in central plant production and overall energy purchases. The effort was completed with minimal disruption to building occupants, demonstrating the department's continued commitment to responsible energy management, cost stewardship, and operational excellence.

STEP INCREASE COMPLETIONS

Completed Step 1 of Operator Training Program

- **KAMERON MADRON**
- **LINCOLN FITTS**
- **TAYTEN NELSON**
- **STEVEN BLAINE PALCZYNSKY**

COMING SOON...

Digital display boards are coming soon to Facilities spaces, creating a way to share updates, team highlights, safety messages, and other important announcements. We're excited to have another way to keep everyone in Facilities informed and connected!

QUARTER ONE SAFETY CHAMPION

Congratulations to Geena Brownell for being this quarter's safety champion!



GEENA BROWNELL
MATERIAL MANAGEMENT

PROMOTIONS



SARAH HARTFORD
BUSINESS OPERATIONS
MANAGER

FEATURED ARTICLES

January Winter Storm

During the January winter storm, Facilities teams across campus stepped up in a big way to keep the University of Oklahoma safe and running. Custodial crews applied ice melt, cleared entrances, and responded to water issues, while Landscaping and Streets and Sidewalks teams worked to keep walkways and roadways as safe as possible. Maintenance shops across campus also responded to weather-related issues to make sure buildings stayed operational throughout the storm.

Utilities and plant operations worked around the clock to keep essential services running. Plant operators ensured heating steam and electrical power continued operating for all campus buildings. Maintenance crews also responded to multiple issues, including frozen lines, leaks, and a major water service line break that flooded more than a mile of utility tunnel. Thanks to the quick response and long hours from Facilities staff, the situation was resolved and campus operations continued. We are incredibly grateful for all of our Facilities teams and truly appreciate the hard work and dedication they show every day, especially during challenging conditions like this.



FEATURED ARTICLES

Rose Garden Renovation

The Rose Garden renovation includes relocating the garden from its previous site near the Physical Sciences Center to a new and more prominent location in front of the OU College of Arts and Sciences. This move allows the garden to become a more visible and accessible campus feature while creating a stronger connection to daily student life. With updated planting beds and improved pathways, the new rose garden is designed to feel intentional and inviting. Almost 100% of the work for this renovation was in house, by Facilities Management.



Utilities Preparing Cate 3 for Demo

Over spring break, our Utilities team worked on a major project to get Cate 3 center ready for demolition. They cut and disconnected the remaining steam and potable water lines, which required a large steam outage from Cate 3 all the way to Sarkeys.



At the same time, crews reconnected the chilled water, steam, and condensate systems in a new tunnel built next to the building. This kind of work is not glamorous, but it takes a lot of coordination and a full team effort to get it done. With this phase finished, Cate 3 is now ready for demo.



FEATURED ARTICLES

Spring Appreciation Breakfast

We loved getting to host our Spring Appreciation Breakfast in the Couch Cafeteria to celebrate all of our Facilities Management team members. It was such a great chance to slow down, connect, and recognize everything you all do to keep campus running every day. We are so grateful for the hard work, dedication, and pride you bring to your roles. Thank you to everyone who came out and made it such a special morning!



Team Member Behind the Scenes!



BRANDI DUNCAN
ADMINISTRATIVE
COORDINATOR

The person making it all happen behind the scenes... who is it? It's Brandi!

Brandi is Facilities Management's Administrative Coordinator.

She joined the Facilities Management team in April 2025 and supports a wide range of activities across the department. Even if you may not have met her in person, you have likely seen emails from her. She works closely with new hires, helping them complete onboarding paperwork, and plays a key role in planning department events and retirement celebrations. Brandi also serves as the administrative representative for the Events, Recognition, and Engagement Committee, assists with social media efforts, and helps keep Facilities Management operations running smoothly.

In addition, she will be leading the department's transition to the new OU applicant tracking system and the OU job board, PageUp, in April.

FEATURED ARTICLES



Tree Planting for Arbor Day

Facilities Management and the Campus Tree Committee were proud to host this year's ceremonial tree planting in celebration of Oklahoma Arbor Week. The event brought together students, faculty, and staff to recognize the vital role trees play in supporting environmental stewardship, enhancing campus beauty, and contributing to a more sustainable OU. It was a really special way for everyone to come together, enjoy being outside, and be part of something that supports a greener, healthier campus moving forward.

Custodial's New Robotic Vacuums

Custodial recently purchased two Kira CV 50 BP robotic vacuums. These machines can clean both hard floors and carpet, taking over the routine vacuuming so staff can focus on more detailed cleaning tasks.

The Kira CV 50 BP maps the area on its own and figures out the best cleaning route. It's compact, runs on powerful 36V batteries, and is easy to maneuver. With a 13.7-inch cleaning path, it can get under furniture, into corners, and right along the edges of walls. It also uses advanced sensors and LiDAR technology to move safely and avoid obstacles.



Quarter One Safety Summary



SAFETY SUMMARY

Quarter One 2026

ON THE JOB INJURIES

19 | **7**
REPORTED | RECORDABLE

- Struck by Falling Object
- Fall causing laceration
- Trip causing foot injury
- Vehicle Rollover Accident
- Twisted Ankle
- Fall causing fracture

TOTAL RECORDABLE INCIDENT RATE

 **6.99**

Trending down from 10.95 in May 2025, continued improvement in workplace safety

OTHER

- 10 trauma kits distributed to Landscape
- 11 new courses added to OnPoint

ACCIDENTS



4

- FM Vehicle backed into student. Student was knocked down but uninjured.
- Forklift ran into overhead fence rail. Forks not lowered when moving.
- Overhead Door impacted by truck.
- Kubota Rollover

NEAR MISS

2

- Electric outlet with ground terminal stuck in hole.
- Carbon dioxide discharge caused by selector switch being in wrong position during maintenance.

CORRECTIVE ACTION:

Training provided and standard operating procedures reinforced.

OBSERVATIONS

1. LACK OF HIGH-VISIBILITY CLOTHING IN LOW-LIGHT CONDITIONS

- A team member was observed working in dim lighting without wearing required high-visibility (HiViz) clothing, reducing visibility and increasing risk of injury.

2. SLIP HAZARD – IMPROPER FOOTWEAR IN EXTREME WEATHER CONDITIONS

- A team member working in extreme weather was not wearing cleats and was observed nearly falling on slick pavement, creating a significant slip and fall risk.

3. EQUIPMENT SAFETY HAZARD – UNGUARDED BELT AND PULLEY IN EVANS HALL

- An unguarded belt and pulley system was observed in Evans Hall, posing a serious risk of entanglement or injury.

4. IMPROPER EQUIPMENT USE – HOMEMADE STEP BOX

- A homemade box was being used as a step, which is unsafe and unstable. It was removed and replaced with a proper, approved step device.

5. TRAFFIC SAFETY HAZARD – LACK OF HIVIZ AND TRAFFIC CONTROL ON CURB WORK

- Team members working near a curb were not wearing HiViz clothing and had not deployed cones or other traffic control devices, increasing the risk of accidents involving nearby vehicles.

COMMITTEE UPDATES



Events, Engagement & Recognition

The 2026 Events, Recognition, & Engagement Committee is chaired by Patrick Downs (Utilities) and includes Brandi Duncan (Administration), Brad Webb (Material Management) and Kristen Odom (Customer Service).

The committee held its kickoff meeting on March 6, 2026, followed by a second meeting to discuss upcoming events, budgets, and committee procedures. Planning is currently underway for the Safety BBQ scheduled for June 2026.

There are still a few openings available, if you're interested in joining, please contact Brandi Duncan at Brandi.R.Duncan-1@ou.edu.



Learning & Development

The Learning and Development (L&D) Committee held its first 2026 meeting on Monday, March 2. Chaired by Sarah Hartford (Business Operations), the committee includes Sophia Hacker (FMBO), Tucker Craig (Landscape), and Roxann Valdez (Landscape). As this is a small group, there are still a few openings available, if you're interested in joining, please contact Sarah Hartford at sarah.hartford-1@ou.edu.

This committee is dedicated to promoting a culture of continuous improvement and supporting ongoing professional development.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 7.



Safety

FM Safety Committee,

I would like to thank Kenny Credille (Chair), Cameryon DeCarlo, Kyle Armon, and Matt Jewell for serving on the 2026 Safety Committee. The committee has had two meetings so far and are hitting the ground running. I'm excited to see the progress this team makes in 2026.

If you see one of them around, make sure to talk with them about any safety concerns you have in your department. The committee is another avenue to voice your thoughts and concerns.

-Jeff Mlekush



Policy

The 2026 policy committee:

- Chair: Jeremy Smith, Maintenance
- Tom Hughes, Utilities
- Christina Jones, Landscape
- Jason Gann, Custodial

The committee had the first meeting on March 10, 2026. Policies written in the past five years were designated to certain committee members for initial review.

UPDATES

SAFETY UPDATES

The first quarter was eventful to say the least! We averaged approximately 6 reported injuries each month. Most of them were minor but a few were serious enough to cause lost time, restricted duties, and surgery.

We also had 4 vehicular incidents this quarter. The incidents ran the gamut from minor property damage to rollover accidents to hitting a pedestrian (the pedestrian was not injured, by the way).

I'd like to remind everyone to please be aware of your surroundings and think before you act. Many of the injuries and accidents this quarter could have been avoided by taking a moment to consider appropriate safe work practices before starting.

Please, stay vigilant and stay safe!

-Jeff Mlekush

HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATES

Facilities Management team,

I wanted to share that my last day with the University will be Friday, April 3. It has truly been a privilege to serve in this role and to work alongside such an outstanding team here at OU. I enjoyed saying goodbye to many of you at the Appreciation breakfast last week

I wanted to pass along a few helpful resources for you in my absence:

- HR Benefit Questions: hrbenefits@ou.edu
- Payroll Questions: payroll@ou.edu
- Retirement Questions: hrretirement@ou.edu
- Family & Medical Leave Act (FMLA): <https://hr.ou.edu/Employees/Holidays-Time-Off-Leave/Family-Medical-Leave-FMLA#4605876-leave-documentation>

I will miss each of you and will always be grateful for this team.

Sincerely,

Jessica Shinabery

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