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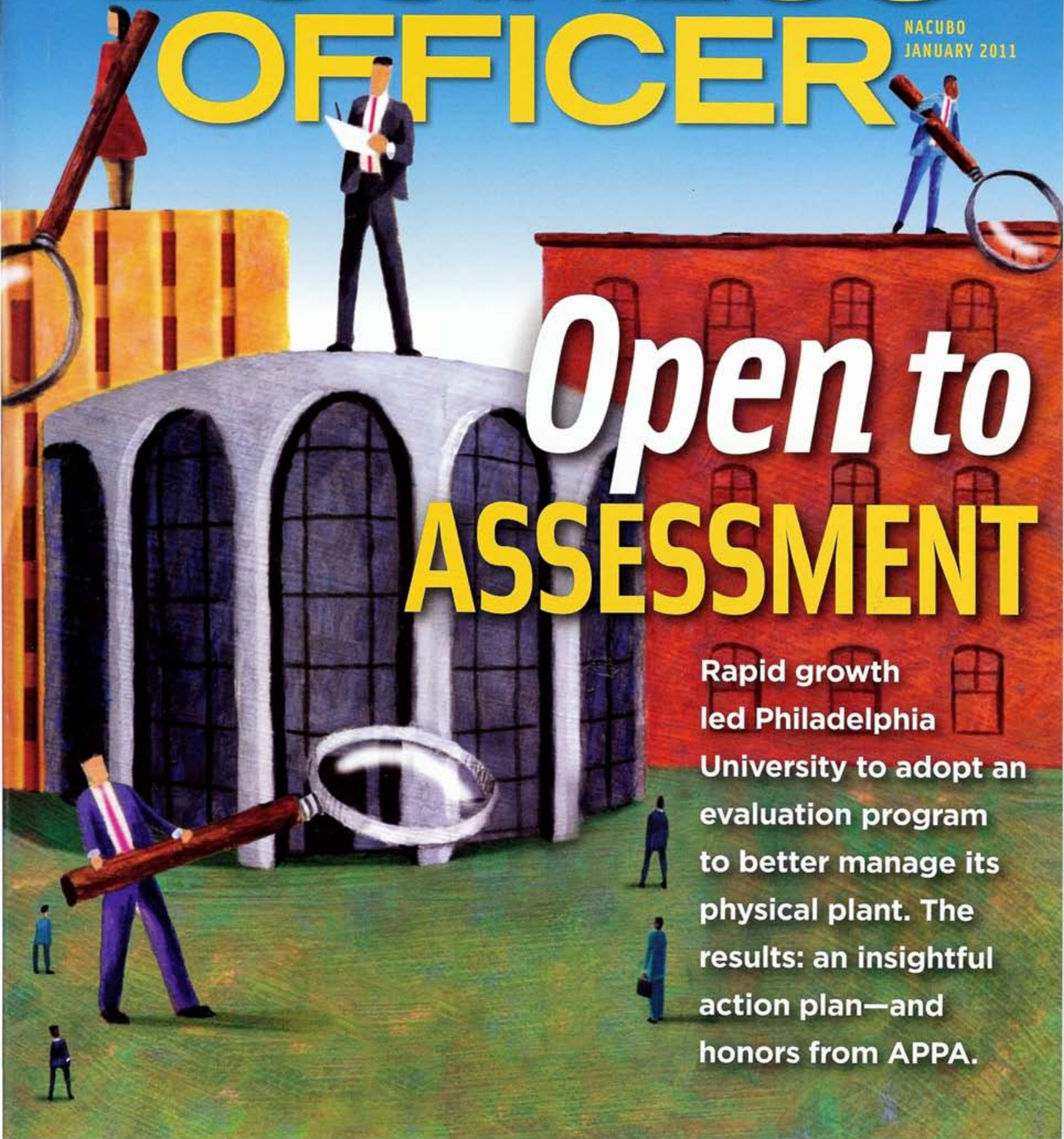
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# BUSINESS OFFICER

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JANUARY 2011

## *Open to* ASSESSMENT

Rapid growth led Philadelphia University to adopt an evaluation program to better manage its physical plant. The results: an insightful action plan—and honors from APPA.



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NACUBO  
JANUARY 2011  
VOL. 44, NO. 6



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## 9 INSIGHTS: Joel Kotkin Urges Relevance

Rethink your institution's offerings and delivery, says Joel Kotkin, Presidential Fellow in Urban Futures at Chapman University, Orange, California. In an interview, Kotkin shares his concern that traditional higher education has become less relevant just when many Americans need more help keeping pace in a shifting economy.

By Ruth Constantine

## 12 Open to Assessment

Rapid growth led Philadelphia University to adopt an evaluation program to better manage its physical plant. The results: an insightful action plan—and honors from APPA.

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Colleges and universities can score big benefits with practical parking and commuter programs. See how a number of institutions are rallying around such solutions.

By Mary-Jane Atwater



READ AN ONLINE EXTRA, "Meeting the Challenges of Parking," in *Business Officer Plus* at [www.nacubo.org](http://www.nacubo.org). The article lists links to college and university parking Web pages and resources available at the International Parking Institute.



Flag Tra

An illustration of a parking lot with several cars parked in rows. The cars are stylized with flat colors and simple shapes. There are also some trees scattered throughout the parking area. The illustration is positioned on the left side of the page, partially overlapping a red banner.

# Transportation Fixes

**Colleges and universities can score big benefits with practical parking and commuter programs. See how a number of institutions are rallying around such solutions.**

By Mary-Jane Atwater

**C**ars, cars, and more cars on campus—how can you park all of them to the satisfaction and convenience of faculty, staff, students, and visitors alike? The answer may lie in using new technologies and taking collaborative approaches to streamline parking operations, increase revenue, and ultimately achieve greater stakeholder satisfaction.

"Campuses that see their role as simply parking and storing cars are missing an incredible opportunity," asserts Casey Jones, director of parking and transportation services at Idaho's Boise State University and incoming chair of the International Parking Institute in Fredericksburg, Virginia. "Done right, parking departments can improve their university's functionality and competitiveness and assist in meeting the overall institutional mission." Here's how some colleges and universities are doing just that.

#### **Tapping Into Technology**

Given students' familiarity and comfort level with technology, employing it on their behalf makes perfect sense. As Jones notes, "The use of technology is where we marry the needs of customers and their expectations of convenience and efficiency in parking operations. Think of

all the other products and services we buy; technology is always part of the solution. Parking should be no different—and, frankly, students demand it."

Technologies that can increase efficiency as well as revenues include:

**Cashless parking.** Overall, the parking industry is moving away from cash transactions toward e-payment funds exchanged electronically using computer networks, the Internet, and digital storage systems. At college and university parking facilities, as elsewhere, e-payment enables customers to swipe a card to pay, then immediately be on their way. E-payment can dramatically improve parking efficiencies, expedite payment processing, and replace labor and the risks of fraud with computer technology.

The George Washington University (GW) was among the first universities in the country to create a cashless parking environment. Located in Washington, D.C., just blocks from the White House, the university has 20,000 students and 10,000 employees who share with a hospital and clinical practices the 20 permit-parking facilities plus four cash garages.

"In 2007, we collected more than \$9 million in yearly parking revenue, of which \$2 million was cash sales," says

Larry J. Cohen, GW's director of transportation and parking services. "We asked ourselves: How can we reduce our cash sales and also provide better customer service, more efficiency, and increased revenue integrity in the process?"

Because the university's students, faculty, and staff already used a university identification card for building access, monthly parking access, and payment for meals, Cohen set out to expand the use of the GWorld card to include a daily parking debit program. The university's parking hardware and software vendor networked the university identification card with the parking system; parkers swipe their cards at entrances and exits as discounted debit transactions, and the balance remaining on the cards appears on the display.

Three years later, the system is meeting Cohen's goals. "Cash sales have been cut in half, there are fewer lines and speedier transactions at the garage cashiers, and the need for staff has been reduced," he reports. "In addition, there is less paperwork with fewer ticket sales, and less foot traffic in the parking office since there are 'recharge' stations at the elevator lobbies. With the reduced number of cash transactions, the risk of theft is lower."

Cohen plans to expand GW's cashless operations by providing pay stations in garage exit lanes that will handle credit cards and the GWorld card as well as cash. He also hopes to make better use of the university's Web-based systems by allowing for parking transactions—including permit purchases and changes in status—online. "The system is a great example of how using current technology and Web-based options allows us to provide 24/7 service to our faculty, staff, students, and visitors," says Louis Katz, George Washington's executive vice president and treasurer.

At a number of campuses, students and visitors can purchase meter debit cards that eliminate the need for cash when parking at a meter. At Harvard University, for example, solar-powered pay-and-display multispace meters, which accept cash and credit cards, reduce the need for cash. "The meters paid for themselves in less than one year," reports Jim Sarafin,

associate director of parking services at Harvard. "The installation has been so successful in our athletics complex that we will soon add an additional unit." Another benefit, adds Sarafin, is that the new system provides the flexibility of short-term parking in previously underutilized areas.

**Cashless payment by phone.** Advances in cell phone technology allow for cashless parking at institutions ranging from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to the University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida, to the University of Colorado at Boulder (CU Boulder). As their name implies, pay-by-phone systems allow customers to pay for parking through their cell phones and receive text reminders before the time expires. In some cases, these systems enable customers to purchase additional parking time.

Since introducing the pay-by-phone system three years ago, the 600-acre Boulder campus has increased parking revenue by approximately 53 percent. "We plan to provide a Web-based version in the near future that our customers can access online from their computers, smart phones, or credit cards, instead of having to make a call," says Melissa D. Yates, CU Boulder's interim director of parking services. She notes another advantage: "The system we use makes it easy to process remote validations, since our enforcement staff no longer need to go to the site and pull a report."

**Automated enforcement and access.** Enforcement of parking regulations can be one of the most sensitive and labor-intensive areas on campus. Automated proximity sensor gates, activated when a driver waves an access card near a sensor, can reduce enforcement labor and contribute to increased revenue by controlling who has access to specific parking facilities. Beth Tindel, parking operations director at Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, Georgia, says, "We've been able to weed out illegal parkers, such as contractors, who need access to our parking. As a result, illegal parkers are forced to sign up as long-term visitors and consequently

pay the standard parking rate, which has increased our profit."

Automated vehicle identification (AVI) can also improve parking operations by significantly reducing parking garage entry and access times. With this technology, drivers purchase an AVI tag, which is placed on the car's windshield and read by an antenna installed at the gate. Drivers appreciate entering and exiting a parking facility without rolling down the window—especially in cold or rainy weather—but the system offers environmental benefits as well.

At the University of Georgia, Athens, which installed AVI at two busy parking decks, entry and exit times decreased nearly 75 percent from 15 seconds to 4 seconds. By eliminating an estimated 885 hours of idling time annually, AVI has prevented the production of 18,000 pounds of carbon, or the equivalent of driving 106,200 miles per year, according to UGA estimates.

On campuses with far fewer than UGA's approximately 34,000 students and 10,000 faculty and staff members, parking officials often rely on more low-tech approaches to enhance enforcement. Many of the 4,700 students at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama, previously held a negative perception of the parking staff and their enforcement duties. Ken England, Samford's director of event management and space utilization, has chipped away at that perception by rebranding parking enforcement at the private university. In addition to moving parking management from the department of public safety and emergency management to a new department of transportation services, he launched the university's PATS program (Positive Affirmation from Transportation Services), which awards gift cards to students who comply with parking regulations.

"While the gift card amount is small, the gesture has been priceless," England says. "What I find so amazing about parking is that we affect or touch the lives of students every day. We can't squander the opportunity to impact them positively and engage with them as an extension of the education they are receiving. When

students come in with half-hearted excuses, we have the opportunity to teach them. I strongly believe that parking is integral to the mission of the university.”

### Connecting in Cyberspace

Traffic congestion and gridlock existed long before the Internet. With Web-based communications have come new ways of addressing those old problems—sometimes by encouraging people not to use their cars at all but rather to rent a bike, reserve a car-share vehicle, or take a shuttle bus.

**Parking pages.** Institutional Web pages often provide daily or weekly updates on road and campus construction, including which parking areas to use or avoid, plus basic information on parking regulations and rates. Many colleges and universities enable students and faculty to register vehicles and purchase parking permits online, as well as pay fines or register for the next parking lottery. Here's a sampling of Web site offerings:

- Through Boise State's parking page, students can not only handle business transactions at their convenience but also access a live feed of the university's shuttle on either their cell phones or computers. A humorous video posted on the page shows how to obtain a parking permit; another video explains Boise State's new Zipcar car-sharing program, designed to reduce demand for on-campus parking.

- The George Washington University's parking pages feature an interactive parking map—just click on your intended destination, and locations of the most convenient lots pop up. In addition to reviewing parking-related FAQs, site visitors can see a photo of all the parking staff and attendants—a great way to personalize the parking operation. GW also relies on a low-tech but useful promotional tool: a tiny pull-out map of parking locations embedded in ballpoint pens.

- California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo shares its entire event-parking management plan with Web site visitors—a good example of parking best practices that serve as “chaos prevention,”

## Community Colleges Confront the Parking Squeeze

Community colleges from coast to coast report surging enrollments. With that rapid growth comes an array of parking challenges, because community colleges serve primarily commuters.

Washtenaw Community College, Ann Arbor, Michigan, for example, has only 3,750 parking spaces for its 18,000 students. Parking is free in all of the school's seven lots, which fill up early each day, especially during the fall and winter semesters. Steven Hardy, Washtenaw's vice president, administration and finance, explains, “The college is currently unable to use all of its existing classroom space since parking is so limited. We are working with parking design and planning consultants Rich & Associates on building a new parking structure and surface lot that will add 530 spaces, which will allow for full utilization of our classrooms.”

To save money, the college will discontinue remote shuttle service from a parking lot at a nearby university. It also has partnered with Zimride, a free online ride-sharing service that helps students find drivers or passengers for their commute to the school.

Washtenaw will realize additional benefits beyond the additional spaces, according to Matt Jobin of Rich & Associates. “We saw the new parking facilities as opportunities to include sustainable design,” says Jobin. “The new parking structure is being designed for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) New Construction Gold Certification with energy-efficient lighting, a green roof over stairs and elevator towers, electric charging stations, and a geothermal field for heating and cooling of occupied spaces.”

Involving parking professionals such as design consultants in your parking planning makes good business sense, notes Shawn Conrad, executive director of the International Parking Institute in Fredericksburg, Virginia. “These parking pros have the expertise and skills to consult on parking facility design, capacity, fees, new technologies, energy efficiencies, and contracts with vendors,” he says.

When adding a new parking structure is not possible, colleges must find other creative solutions. Those may involve collaborations and partnerships, as evidenced by the approach taken by Lansing Community College (LCC). Located in Lansing, Michigan, the college serves 19,000 students. Because the urban campus is compact, parking expansion would encroach on adjacent neighborhoods and therefore isn't feasible. In addition to encouraging students and staff to use public transportation, LCC partnered with the City of Lansing to provide discounted parking at municipal parking facilities near campus.

LCC's StarCard allows for cashless transactions at on-campus parking facilities, and the college recently introduced a semester parking card designed for students who park on campus more than 20 hours a week. With the semester parking card, students prepay their parking fees for the entire semester and can park any time of the day or night at authorized ramps.



says Cindy Campbell, Cal Poly associate director of university police. The Web site also offers the options to purchase permits and pay or appeal citations. "On the front end, students expect to be able to access parking and traffic information instantly and conduct transactions remotely at any time, so we've moved to offer more customer service online," says Larry Kelley, Cal Poly's vice president for administration and finance. "At the back end, we've used technology to enhance our collection efforts and increase revenue."

**Social sites.** Using Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and other social networking sites, university officials share information that can help students, faculty, and other drivers avoid traffic congestion and gridlock. The University of California, Irvine; Georgia State University, Atlanta; and Texas A&M, College Station, for example, use Twitter to provide real-time information on traffic and parking conditions, including which lots are nearly full. The University of Oklahoma, Norman, uses a parking-specific Twitter feed to identify the best places to park, announce which lots are closed due to construction, and answer parking questions from the campus community. A typical post: "Good Monday morning, drivers! You'll find open spaces (175) in the Asp Avenue garage and 150 in the Elm Avenue garage."

Parking officials at Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey, and Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, not only use Twitter but also have parking-specific Facebook pages with updates on parking and other transportation services. The University of Texas at San Antonio turned to YouTube to post a short video promoting Fast Pass, its preloaded debit card; likewise, the parking department at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, has posted four videos on YouTube, including one that explains how to acquire an OSU parking permit and avoid citations.



Parking is a business enterprise, one with revenue potential but also with implications for an institution's reputation.

**On the air.** Social media can stand alone as communications tools or be paired with traditional media. The University of Kentucky (UK), Lexington, for example, uses Twitter as well as its own radio station to provide information on parking, special events, construction updates, and weather delays. The low-power AM station, which operates 24 hours a day, can be heard within three miles from campus. It primarily transmits prerecorded messages, although the station can go live when circumstances warrant immediate updates.

Don Thornton, UK's parking and transportation services director, proposed the radio station in 2009, when the university hosted 2,030 special events that drew thousands of people who were not familiar with the campus and its parking regulations. Thornton envisioned the radio station as a means of communicating parking information for special events and major athletic events. During the planning process, however, he realized the radio station had many other uses: to facilitate residence hall move-in days, guide patients and visitors to University of Kentucky health-care facilities, communicate about campus bus services, and provide emergency announcements.

"Campus parking and directional signage can be overwhelming for the uninitiated. The station provides another avenue to communicate to the community," explains Frank Butler, executive vice president of Kentucky's office of finance and administration. "Because parking serves as the first and last impression of our campus, we are working to make visitor parking a more positive experience for everyone."

### Community Collaboration

On some campuses, collaborating with local community agencies is the answer to resolving parking congestion. The University of Minnesota's Web site provides links to the state department of transportation's Twitter and smart-phone feeds on traffic conditions, plus a link to the local weather forecast. To maximize available parking at its Twin Cities campus, which spans five miles from end to end and attracts about 80,000 people daily, the U of M partnered with Metro Transit and several other transit agencies to offer discounted bus passes.

For \$97 per semester, students can purchase a U-Pass good for unlimited rides, every day and all day, on all regular route bus lines and light rail; a Metropass offering similar benefits for \$76 per month is available for staff and faculty. Both U-Pass and Metropass holders qualify for Metro Transit's Guaranteed Ride Home program—every six months, pass holders



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receive two coupons good for a free transit ride, or cab fare up to \$25, for use in emergency or unexpected situations.

The university introduced U-Pass 10 years ago through a partnership with the Metropolitan Council and funding from a Congestion Mitigation Air Quality grant. At the time, an estimated 7,020 members of the U of M community were bus riders, according to Bob Baker, U of M executive director of parking and transportation services. By fall 2009, the university had 23,133 student bus pass holders and 2,200 faculty/staff bus pass holders—representing approximately 43 percent of students and 15 percent of staff and faculty. (For more about alternative transit options, see “Easy Riders” in the April 2010 issue of *Business Officer*.)

U of M staff and faculty also have the option of reserving parking spots for their guests, making parking more hassle-free for visitors who occasionally attend

a campus function or event. Even if a parking facility is labeled “full,” the guest is guaranteed a parking space. Parking reservations, available at most public facilities on campus, must be made one business day in advance and charged to the unit or department.

### Thinking It Through

Clearly, parking is a business enterprise, one with revenue potential but also with implications for an institution's reputation. When you routinely handle an influx of cars efficiently—by providing accessible, convenient, and fairly priced parking—you'll meet, or even exceed, the expectations of students, faculty, staff, and visitors. New technologies and collaborative partnerships can help improve an institution's parking business, provided they are employed strategically and with a long-term view—and a good way to achieve that is to include

experienced parking professionals in early decision making.


“Providing convenient and efficient access to campus is critical at a strategic level,” says Jo Ellen DiNucci, associate vice president for finance and administration at Boise State University. “We need to become comfortable with adapting new systems and allowing our business to evolve.”

“We need to get our parking business right—there isn't a one-size-fits-all solution,” she continues. “Technology allows us to better serve our customers and tailor our commuter packages. Viewing parking only as a revenue source, and using that revenue in any other way than to plan for future needs, is a missed opportunity.”

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## MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF PARKING

Here are resources, including links to college and university parking Web pages, and information available at the International Parking Institute.

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The expectation that campus parking will be available, convenient, and virtually free often leads to heated discussions, especially at academic institutions facing soaring enrollment or rapid expansion. To see how other college and university business officers have addressed this issue, read "Flag Transportation Fixes" in the January 2011 issue of *Business Officer* and check out these online resources.

## NO CASH NEEDED

Deducting parking fees from prepaid cards, which often double as student identification cards, minimizes exit times and lines at parking facilities.

- o [GWorld Debit Card](#), George Washington University, Washington, D.C.
- o [StarCard](#), Lansing Community College, Lansing, Michigan

## ON THE WEB

Institutional Web pages offer a wealth of information on parking rules and fees, lot locations and capacities, and transportation alternatives.

- o [Boise State University](#)
- o [George Washington University](#)
- o [University of Colorado at Boulder](#)
- o [University of Kentucky, Lexington](#)
- o [University of Oklahoma, Norman](#)
- o [University of Vermont, Burlington](#)
- o [The International Parking Institute](#) (IPI) offers numerous resources on parking, including a newsletter, a monthly magazine, and an annual conference and exposition.

Through the association, says Cindy Campbell, IPI's chair, "College and university business officers will find a wealth of information about parking issues." Campbell, associate director of university police, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, adds: "Topics include security, new technologies, facility design and construction, enforcement strategies, and sensitive subjects such as suicide prevention."

## GETTING SOCIAL

Social networking applications can quickly get the word out about current traffic conditions and new parking programs.

- o [Videos](#) about Zipcar and parking passes, Boise State University
- o [Facebook](#) page of Rutgers University, New Jersey
- o [Twitter feed](#), University of Kentucky
- o [Twitter feed](#), University of Oklahoma
- o [Video](#) about Fast Pass, University of Texas at San Antonio