



**COMPANY:**

University of Michigan - Ann Arbor Campus Plant Building and Grounds Services Department (PBGS)

**LOCATION:**

Ann Arbor, Michigan

**EMPLOYEES:**

440 Managers and FTEs

## CIMS Certification Helps Physical Plant Department Live Up to University Motto

For years, the University of Michigan's Plant Building and Grounds Services Department struggled with proving that, as a department, they not only live up to the university's well-known motto: "The Leaders and Best," but embrace its philosophy and values. The management and 440 employees of PBGS truly believed that their department was operated in an efficient and quality manner, but it was not until Darryl Betts learned about the new ISSA Cleaning Industry Management Standard that the department was able to prove that it was a leader, not only within the university, but amongst other in-house and contracted cleaning organizations as well.

"We saw CIMS certification as one way our department could exemplify that philosophy and gain the respect our staff deserves," said Betts, area manager of PBGS. "Too often in this industry, you know you're at the top of your field, but you have no way to independently prove that belief. Now we do, and that has tremendous value."

While other service departments within the university have won industry awards or are Energy Star certified, Betts identified CIMS as the first certification program that looked at an entire department and required the department to meet a set of management expectations that range from how you train employees to how you interact with customers.

"The university clearly demonstrated during the assessment that their comprehensive management program is not just talk," said Dan Wagner, ISSA Director of CIMS. "They truly believe in and have put to work the quality management principles that are required by the Standard. The university has shown precisely the kind of top-down commitment we were striving to promote during the development of CIMS."

### The Process of Complying

Betts, a 20-year veteran with the department, led the PBGS team through the process of documenting compliance with the five core sections of CIMS (quality systems; service delivery; human resources; health, safety & environmental stewardship; and management commitment), to prepare the department for its assessment of management and operational follow-through. After documentation and on-site evaluation by an independent, third-party assessor, the department was recommended for CIMS Certification.

While Betts led the program, the entire PBS team participated in the process. Janet Allen, PBGS technical training coordinator, spent two months gathering and documenting policies and other requirements of CIMS to demonstrate compliance. Allen immediately recognized that the task would not be an easy one, but came with great benefits and promised to be quite enlightening. "You may start out feeling like there is too much to compile and that you don't know where to begin, but I found that it was manageable if you are organized and take a systematic approach when working through the checklist of compliance items," she advised.

"We discovered that we had tremendous resources within our department and elsewhere in the university that had never been pulled together into a single document for easy access."

Lukeland Gentles, Business Manager for PBGS, was also involved in the process and was struck by how CIMS promotes information sharing across an entire organization and provides ready access to management information. "Often times you have different individuals responsible for different aspects of an organization and may not have a good understanding of one another's areas and their impact on overall operations," he said. "CIMS compelled us to go to everyone from OSHA

“CIMS may very well become the lay of the land. By doing it now, your department gains the full benefits and prestige that comes with bringing this cutting-edge program to the table, rather than ending up at the back of the bus when it becomes a directive from someone else.”

~Darryl Betts, Area Manager,  
University of Michigan -  
Ann Arbor Campus  
Plant Building and Grounds  
Services Department

## BEST TIP FOR COMPANIES THINKING ABOUT CERTIFICATION:

*To use CIMS to improve internal morale, gain buy-in from your entire team during the process. To do so, encourage team review of appropriate sections, as well as input when editing plans, policies and procedures to comply with the Standard.*

representatives to human resources and gather knowledge.” Gentles further stressed that such gathering of information helps deal with situations where someone may be absent or may have left the university by making sure that there is no information gap.

Allen agrees. “For instance, some of us were not as familiar regarding the university’s procurement processes, so it was a good learning experience to better understand that aspect of our operations,” she adds.

Due to their efforts complying with CIMS, PBGS now has what the team refers to as “management in a box” – a set of seven comprehensive binders that can be referenced by anyone in the organization. Further, PBGS plans to place all the management and operations material on a CD for easy access, updating, mobility and sharing within the department, the university and amongst peers in the industry.

### The Value of CIMS Certification

PBGS found the certification process useful not only in identifying areas where they are successful but also areas that could be improved, reinforcing the need to standardize and simplify processes. The team’s efforts found that some things as simple as personnel disciplinary form letters differed from area to area, and the department is now working with the Human Resources department to make employee communications more consistent. The group also had engaged in past discussions regarding the need to standardize and simplify equipment procurement and their CIMS preparation efforts reaffirmed the need to move forward.

“The ISSA certification process was certainly an informative and positive experience,” said John Lawter, PBGS Associate Director. “It reinforced our beliefs in what we feel we are doing right, as well as identified areas for improvement. It was a nice opening act to our next round of strategic planning.”

“We’ve already started addressing additional improvement because the certification process brought a lot of discussions to the forefront that were logical next steps in continuous improvement,” said Gentles.

One possible area that PBGS expects to focus on involves the use of workloading software. According to the team, going through the CIMS certification process helped them see the value of workloading tools being used by more decision makers in the organization. PBGS, therefore, expects to expand the use of such software to include, not only upper management, but supervisors as well.

PBGS also sees CIMS certification and the fact that it applies equally to in-house operations and contract cleaners as valuable in creating a level playing field. “When you’re always under the microscope and the common perception is that someone else can do your job more efficiently, it is invaluable to be able to hold the same certification that is available to contract cleaners,” said Betts.

Gentles notes that the international credibility ISSA brings to the table also can have a significant impact when communicating with internal clients, upper management and peer institutions. Achieving certification from the worldwide cleaning industry association lends terrific support come budget time, he adds.

“If a global organization says your department is operating as efficiently as possible in these cornerstone areas of management and customer focus, then you’ll be taken a bit more seriously the next time someone considers cutting your budget,” Gentles advises. [CIMS](#)

### About CIMS:

CIMS is the first comprehensive management and operations standard for cleaning organizations. Administered by ISSA and the American Institute for Cleaning Sciences, CIMS is a standard of excellence designed to help building service contractors and in-house service providers develop quality, customer-centered organizations.

The CIMS framework is built around five quality principles that have proven to be the hallmarks of well-managed, successful cleaning operations:

- Quality Systems
- Human Resources
- Management Commitment
- Service Delivery
- Health, Safety & Environmental Stewardship

Why should a company certify to CIMS? Daniel Wagner, director of CIMS for the ISSA, explains: “Implementation of the standard’s elements affords an organization a tremendous opportunity to validate its management systems and processes. Professional, customer-centered cleaning organizations finally have a touchstone resource, a common rallying point around which all members of the industry can gather and work toward achieving an unprecedented level of professionalism and excellence.”

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