

# COLLEGE

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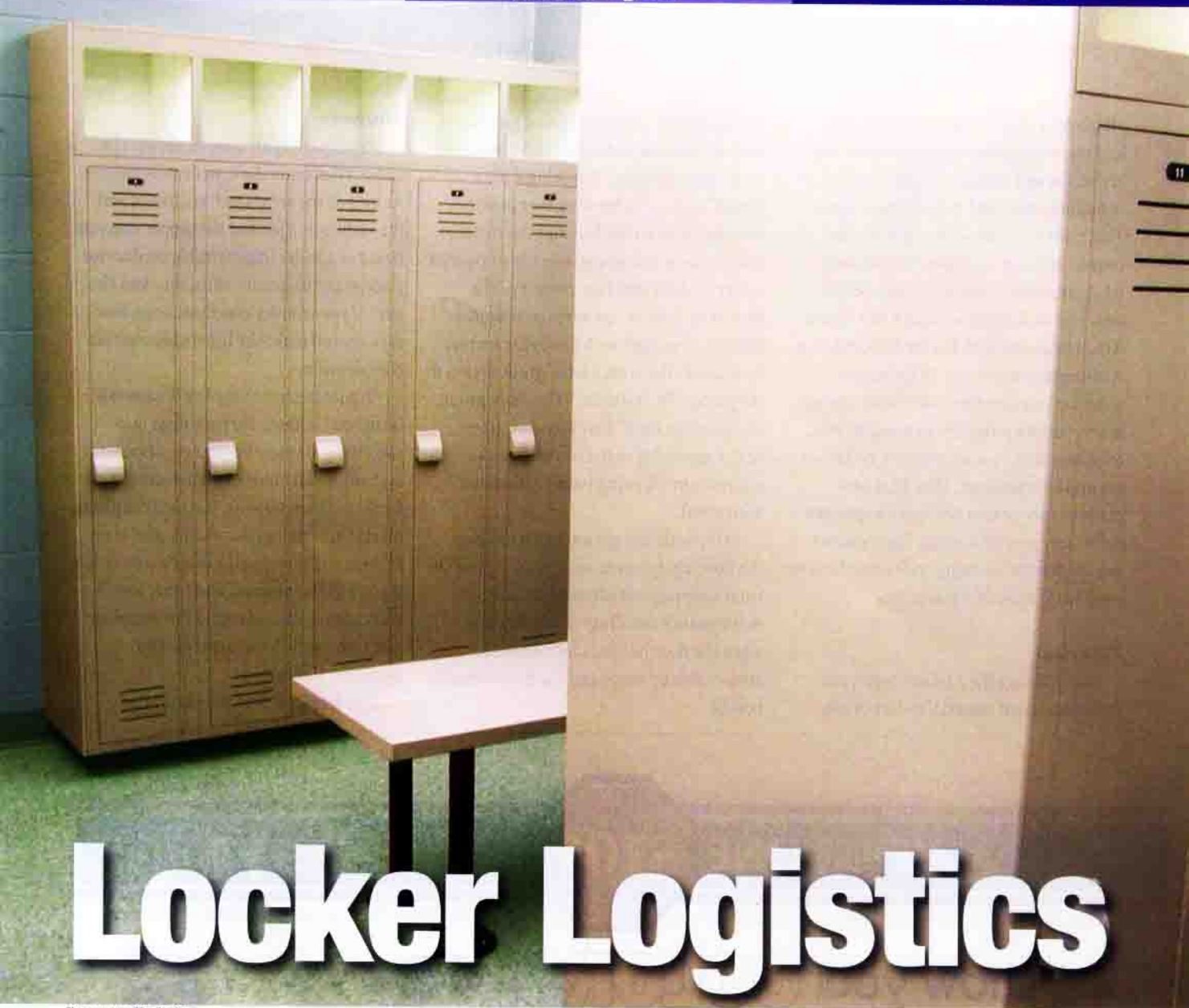
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# Locker Logistics

Photo courtesy of Bradley Corp.

Creating snazzy locker rooms is an easy task for administrators today because many of the safety and maintenance issues are already built in.

Tom Simmons wanted to recruit good athletes to his basketball, baseball, and volleyball teams at Ohio Northern University, so he started with the obvious: upgrading the locker rooms. After tackling the men's basketball and baseball facilities, he unveiled the women's basketball, volleyball, and software locker rooms in the summer of 2007.

He was mainly searching for space — taking out walls and relegating storage needs to other equipment rooms in an effort to find the square footage to devote to a media center where athletes could stretch out and watch game films. “Make it a home for them,” as Simmons described,

which included larger wooden lockers, carpeting, new lighting fixtures, and a large screen television. In the end, he only squeezed an additional 200 sq. ft. into the women's lockers, and no new space at all on the men's side. But both sexes used the same manufacturers for a uniform, standard look, and the difference has been astonishing.

“The students have been in awe compared to what they had,” he noted. “It's a recruiting tool. Kids look at where they're going to spend their time, and they want something that looks nice.”

Ohio Northern University, situated in Ada, OH, could be a poster child for what

all modern athletic directors strive for, and there's nothing standing in their way, architects and interior designers assure — including safety and maintenance issues. That's not to say these are unimportant, of course, just non-intrusive. "It's all about what my mother instilled in me: cleanliness and maintenance," said Keith Hayes, AIA, a principal with Barker Rinker Seacat Architecture in Denver. "If the locker room isn't cleaner than your bathroom at home, you are probably not going to want to change in it." As an architect, he knows his impact is indirect; after all, a pool maintenance person can make a spectacular locker room look awful. But it doesn't hurt to give the cleaning crew something to work with in the first place.

**Flooring**

When designing a locker room, the most important material to Jim Olson,

vice president and principal of Zimmerman Architectural Studios in Milwaukee, is the right flooring. Anything with a "tooth" to it — something that provides friction between the feet and the surface itself to reduce slipping, like tile or poured epoxy — falls into that category. The variety of choices can surprise administrators: large tiles with a rougher texture or smaller tiles with a lot of grout between the pieces, for instance. "The more grout, the more friction," Olson said. A grout sealer applied at installation time can address any cleaning issues associated with grout.

It is possible to get too much tooth on the flooring, however, which isn't a problem from a slippage standpoint but drives the maintenance side crazy. That's because when the floor becomes too rough, the surface rips up mops and the fibers remain behind.

**Showers**

Mold is rarely an issue in showers because it thrives in dark, wet environments. As long as the area is well ventilated and the architects specified the proper concrete board or similar impenetrable product for placement behind the walls, this won't be part of your shower concerns. Soap, however, should make the list of construction considerations.

"An interesting thing I've discovered is that our affiliated firms will go nuts specifying all these boric soap-dispensing systems — all kinds of manufacturers offer these fancy systems. But then the after-market approaches our clients, and many of them will give you the dispensers for free if you buy their liquids and paper towels. So I counsel folks to talk to their vendors and save a little bit of money on the systems," Hayes said.

But definitely plan to provide the



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## Changing environments demand privacy, but not so much that it encourages vandalism or theft.

cleansing soaps and shampoos, too... the better to control the overall maintenance efforts. If someone brings in his or her own bar soap, that brand might have a binder that creates a film with certain ceramic tiles. "I'd be willing to bet that if you penciled it out, you would save the money you spend on the soap because you don't have the soap scum issues," added Hayes.

That same thinking applies to sink areas. Hard surface materials (think Corian) stand up over time to sitting water, and sinks mounted under the counter allow particles to be pushed into the sink itself and washed down the drain. Lips, Olson pointed out, just provide a barrier to trap dirt.

### Lockers

Wood lockers may offer that professional classy touch, but Hayes rarely recommends them for a collegiate group setting. In an environment with a pool or high humidity, he encourages phenolic resin or solid plastic lockers to withstand corrosion issues. "If you have wood or metal there, invariably you end up with a locker room replacement," he warned.

Save the upscale wooden lockers for those you need to impress — your scholarship athletes, as Ohio Northern did — or as a source of revenue, à la the University of Missouri. Hayes is particularly impressed with the way administrators there charge a fee to access the more upscale section of a locker room — complete with wooden storage units, aftershave dispensers, and complementary mouthwash — just like a private country club environment.

And for any student group, insist on

lockers that are fully perforated for air movement lest you get moldy messes that start growing (and smelling) behind the padlocks.


### Lighting

Good old fluorescent fixtures are the best method to light a locker room, in Olson's experience. Recessed basket versions in particular give off adequate lighting, yet protect the bulbs themselves from direct damage from flying balls, equipment mishaps, and other accidents.

### Lay-Out

Flexibility is the final key, and the point where Simmons started. "The ability to have areas where the teams can meet and hold a meeting away from the lockers is very important," Olson agreed. "It can be done in a number of ways, from permanent benches to chairs that can be put out," he said. Just remember, you need storage for the chairs if you go that route.

Changing environments demand privacy, but not so much that it encourages vandalism or theft, which Hayes said are very real locker room issues. The trick is to create groups of lockers within an open space where staff can easily walk through without running into hidden corners or alcoves.

Lastly, don't be afraid to use school colors liberally via carpeting, tile inserts, and signage. "We probably take colors and logos a bit further than we might in a public community facility," Hayes admitted. "The college administration tends to be more youthful and more amenable to trendier things. So I don't know that you can overdo it when it comes to school spirit." 

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## Locker Selection Tips

**Tiers** — The most important specification to consider is the number of tiers you need. What will be stored in the lockers is a determining factor. Single-tier and double-tier lockers are suitable for almost any storage need. They have the capacity for hanging items such as shirts and jackets. Lockers with three tiers or more are suited for securing smaller items such as athletic gear, purses, books, etc. They also are the most space saving units and because of their smaller size you have the advantage of more storage units per locker.

**Handles** — Lift handles provide the user with easy and quick access, as well as making it simple to apply a padlock to secure the handle. Recessed handles leave no chance for vandals to break the handles off and gain access. Certain lockers with recessed handles can also have a combination lock added as an option. Recessed

handles, like lift handles, can be padlocked. Door pulls with padlock hasps provides a friction catch door pull handle, and the hasp provides a convenient way to attach a padlock.

**Green materials** — Selecting solid plastic lockers is not only a smart move for reducing maintenance costs; it is also a wise environmental choice. Lockers made from 100-percent post-consumer recycled plastic are just as durable as those with less recycled content. These lockers are unaffected by moisture, humidity, chlorine, or salt water and will never rust. They also carry guarantees against breakage or delamination. Unlike metal lockers, solid plastic lockers never require painting, and graffiti can be easily removed. Plastic lockers withstand dents and impact that would easily damage metal lockers.

**Ventilation** — Lockers that are going to contain athletic equipment will require ventilation. Many lockers are available with perforated sides that allow maximum airflow throughout the locker, which is imperative to prevent odor-causing bacteria. The ventilation slots also allow visual inspection of locker contents without having to open the locker if extra security is a possible concern.

**Wall-mounted Lockers** — Wall-mounted lockers work well where space is at a premium. Most wall-mounted lockers come equipped with four private compartments and a large coat rack under the lockers. These lockers can also be placed on a shelf or cabinet without a coat rack.

**Sloped tops** — Flat-top lockers are much more likely to collect dust and are hard to clean, due to the height of lockers.



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