

COUNTERACTING CUTBACKS

Duke's David Love uses computer and talking to students to take the bite out of across-the-board cutbacks

By Maureen Hrehocik
Associate Editor



David Love, manager of operations at Duke University in Durham, NC. Recent jobs included a \$400,000 renovation to the varsity soccer stadium and intra-mural fields.

Everyone today seems to be looking for ways to reduce operating costs while maintaining a high rate of services and quality. David Love, manager of operations at Duke University in Durham, NC, is no exception.

Constant interaction and communication with administration and students, a good working knowledge of his campus and a little help from an IBM personal computer are things helping to take the bite out of across-the-board cutbacks.

Love is using a computer to handle administrative problems, keep track of attendance and start a preventive maintenance program for his 900-acre facility which is divided into three main areas - the campus, medical center and golf course.

"We're also looking at possibly putting our work schedule on the computer as well," Love said.

Use of a computer really underscores the type of problems Love finds himself contending with.

"My problems are really more

business-related now, than with turf," he admitted. "We're trying to change our operation from labor intensive to equipment-oriented.

One turf area Love does have problems with is shade. He said the campus, some parts of it built in the 1800s, has very few large, open grass areas. One of the reasons for this is Duke's School of Forestry Department. Because of it, large

tracts of forest were left intact for research purposes.

"The inner campus is populated with large oak and white and Southern pines, he said. "We've had to go to alternate solutions for groundcover such as ivy, vinca or mulching with pine bark or pine straw. We're going toward a more natural look. Love also said this

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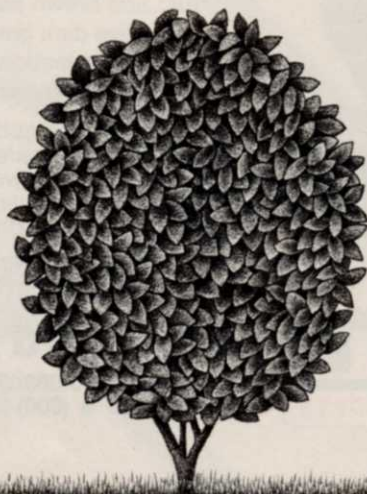
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move toward a more natural look cuts down on his mowing. He said he wants to reduce his 24 riding mowers by eight. To do this, he is also using more growth retardants such as Embark to cut down mowing areas.

Love uses eight Yazoo YR 60s and 12 Toro Groundsmaster 72s. He has four of the newer diesel models, which, he says, he's very happy with.

"Because of the students, we've found using a rear discharge mower is safer and it also cuts down on grass clippings getting on the sidewalks." Love uses a Turfpro 84 reel

"My problems are really more business-related than with turf . . ."

mower to mow the athletic fields.

"We have been pretty much using Toro equipment because of its availability and it's easy to maintain," he said.

Love is responsible for 125 pieces of motorized equipment.

Of the 900-acre campus, 300 acres are in turfgrass and 57 acres are athletic fields. Love used to overseed all areas and used paraquat and Roundup on his bermudagrass fields.

"This year I didn't overseed the football fields or the practice fields. We used the irrigation system right up until December to keep the fields green. The soccer, baseball and intramural sports fields were overseeded with Legend ryegrass, which we've found to be a hardy-type rye. On other areas of the campus, we use a Baron mixture in the shade problem areas."

Love also has an 18-hole golf course to maintain which has its own \$130,000 budget, not including major equipment purchases. Designed by Robert Trent Jones, Love says the course is hard to maintain on its current budget which includes five full-time staff members and six to eight students in the summer. There is currently almost

year-round maintenance on the course which is open to the public. The master plan for the course calls for upgrading the irrigation system, building seven bridges over various stream locations, and changing some of the greens. (The course has bentgrass greens with bermudagrass fairways). Love said contributions from the alumni are funding a \$1 million goal to accomplish the upgrading.

"The course is really in extremely good shape turf-wise," Love said. "We'll be adding some bunkers and deleting some."

Other major changes Love has completed on campus are a \$400,000 renovation to the varsity soccer stadium and intra-mural fields. Outdoor lighting was installed and three more acres of bermudagrass turf were added to the playing fields. Love is also planning to replace the sand base of most of the campus' slate sidewalks with concrete bases to level the sidewalks. This job is expected to cost around \$350,000.

"We work on a five-year capital plan. We allot \$50,000 a year for equipment replacement. We're on a 10-year replacement schedule."

Love said the students as well as the administration take a more active involvement in the maintenance of the grounds than perhaps at most schools.

"We have lots of inspection tours here, with the administration taking an active role in how the campus develops.

"The students are very different here. They're very active in the administration of the campus. They're very boisterous in how they make their feelings known about how things are being done. There is a building and grounds committee, which is part of the student government, which I meet with once a month to discuss why we're doing things a certain way. We also have a faculty administrative oversight committee which even has input on what trees we cut down. We have a good working relationship, but these controls must be dealt with."

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While working with various administrative and student committees, Love is also responsible for administering a \$1.6 million budget which is divided into 10 individual budgets. The campus is divided into six major areas - East, West, Central, Athletic, Central Housing and Medical (which is the largest.) Each has its own budget.

"We started off at 0-base budgeting and worked out budgets from there. The administration developed four different sets of standards for each area - trees, shrubs, turf maintenance and litter control. They then choose the amount of funding they would allot to each area.

Landscape work around new buildings (the university averages about one a year) is contracted out. Also the work done around the student housing area including erosion control and planting trees, is also contracted out.

"It's easier and more a matter of sheer volume," Love said.

Love 33, has been manager of operations at Duke for the past 2½

Love said the students as well as the administration take a more active role in the maintenance of the grounds than perhaps at most schools.

years. He holds a degree in horticulture from Michigan State and a business degree from the University of Toledo. Prior to coming to Duke, he was director of grounds and housekeeping for three years at Bowling Green State University in Ohio.

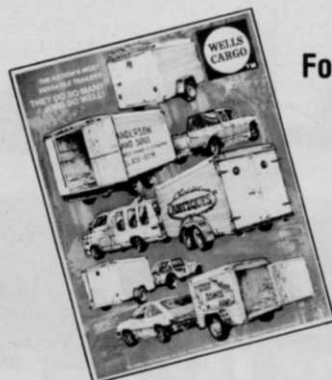
With 9,000 students, 12,000 employees and 900 acres of campus to contend with, Love's strategy for success is simple.

"Coordination is why it functions as well as it does," he says simply. "We are trying to deliver quality and maintain it with an expanding campus and with slight growth in our budget." **WTT**

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