

# University parking essay sample

[Education](#), [University](#)



Introduction.“ Big universities are like small cities. They have athletic facilities, concert halls, housing, hospitals, libraries, museums, offices, restaurants, stores, theaters, and, of course, parking. Big universities also have big transportation problems.” [1] Universities have problems with parking, in part, for the same reason they have problems finding presidents. They have diffuse and demanding constituencies—faculty, students, staff, alumni and surrounding communities—that all need and expect different things. Students want plenty of parking near dorms. Faculty members want the budget to go toward books and buildings rather than \$10 million parking structures. Staff members want parking to be safer and less expensive. Alumni often simply want to find it. Local residents want to make the cars—and the resulting traffic and congestion—disappear. And all would appreciate it if parking spaces weren’t moved every week to accommodate campus construction.

Colleges and universities are somewhat unique in their access requirements, since they are made out of different schools, each having its own specific needs to secure its assets. This poses many challenges in the process of designing a parking and access control system for them. Designing an efficient and cost effective automated access and parking system for university campuses goes a long way in projecting an image of a safe and secure environment. Safety and security is the second most important question in the mind of a parent while selecting a University. The smallest breach makes headlines and causes a lot of grief all around. Good security offers peace of mind to the students as well as parents.

Approaches to university parking. There are two main approaches to university campus parking policies—political and economic [2-3]. The political approach relies on administrative rules to allocate parking, while the economic approach relies on flexible prices. Most universities rely mainly on rules to manage campus parking.

Allocation . Most parking spots are allocated administratively based on the job classification of the employee. For example at most universities there is a dedicated prime spot for audio-visual support, maintenance, and environmental health and safety personal. The rationale for this is that the job function of these individual is essential to the teaching and research mission of the university and therefore no barrier to the performance of their function can be tolerated. Usually, these spots remain empty, except for a few occasions, usually at the beginning of the semester when new course instructors, and new course materials are being tried out.

Parking spots not dedicated to critical personnel are allocated based on a feudal hierarchy. UCLA, for example, has 175 different types of parking permits, carefully graded according to the status of each administrator, faculty member, staff member, or student [4]. Major donors receive campus parking permits based on the size of their donations. Parking privileges are cumulative, which means that holders of higher-ranking permits can park in the spaces reserved for their own rank *and* in the spaces available to all permits of a lower rank.

Restrictions. Many universities struggle with effective solutions to parking [5]. The obvious approach is to institute policies that will reduce the number

of cars on campus. Such policies can include incentives for car pooling, such as a reduced rate, free parking for large carpools, maintaining a well-publicized web site of willing volunteers for ride-matching. This approach needs some flexibility in the event someone occasionally cannot carpool, such as a limited number of “ free passes” during the semester.

Unfortunately for those universities with a ride board, even though many persons might know about it, considerably fewer actually use it (Figure 1) [6]

Figure 1. Comparison of the percentage of persons who are aware of carpooling and the Ride Board at Brown University and those who actually use it [6].

Other approaches taken by some universities where their landscape allows is to promote walking and biking instead of driving. This can include the design and construction of safe walking and biking paths, bike racks for parking, prohibiting trucks etc parked on side walks, and some incentives, such as the availability of a limited number of cheap parking permit days, for those who occasionally need parking. In some cases student parking on campus is simply limited, with a sliding scale on parking based on the year in school of the student. Usually freshman have the most limitations, all prices are generally kept high to discourage all student parking, and the most remote spots are allocated to students. The approach of limiting car accessibility to student is based on typical survey statistics such as those taken at Brown University which indicate that students generally don't have cars anyway (Figure 21)[6]

Figure 2. Comparison of the percentage of persons who do and do not have cars that need to be parked on campus at Brown University [6].

Building new parking. As mentioned the construction of additional parking spots is a popular solution to the parking dilemma. Usually this is done by constructing more perimeter parking and more parking decks. To make this truly effective, particularly for large spreadout university campuses, a bus service to and from the various remote parking lots should be installed [7]. This not only encourages use of these more distant spots but also adds to the safety of the overall campus at non-peak hours, since students need not walk through a dark and deserted campus to get to their vehicles. Another factor is frequency of the bus route which should be sufficient not only for the high demand peak hours of start, lunch and quitting time, but reasonable waiting periods for non-peak hours.

Pricing. Average Cost Pricing is often used to determine the price of parking permits at most universities. The rationale behind this is to recover the costs of building and maintaining the entire parking system for the university. If the price of parking is the same for all spaces regardless of their location or the time of day then there is no way for the university to manage the supply of parking efficiently. At peak times there is not enough space, while at off-peak times there are too many spaces. One of the criticisms of this system is that it tends to lead universities to think that more parking spots are needed. Once new spaces are built, even more students begin to drive to school filling up these new spaces, recreating the problem again, since more students at

peak hours need more spaces, while at off-peak hours there are now a huge number of unoccupied spaces.

Parking fee structures can also contribute to poor allocation of existing parking spots on campus, that might appear at peak times to look as though there is not enough parking spots, when in fact the problem is poorly allocated spots. If fees are based on employment status and not income, it places an unfair burden on administrators and faculty, who may be part time, and therefore not truly earning the full income for that position. Some long term employees also earn more than entry level staff, and if the spots are assigned for a long term then new employees are totally locked out since the truly prime spots were long ago allocated to others.

A single fees for all parking permits, regardless of status, means that those who are forced to park in undesirable parts of campus, subsidize the prime spots of others. This leads to the impression that parking fees overall are too high. If this one price system is combined with convenience allocation of parking based on status it still does not solve the problem, since there is a limited number of truly convenient spots relative to each work location, and it is inevitable that someone who has paid for a prime parking spot, will be locked out of the convenient parking since others will have arrived before them. Many universities have adopted a parking system that factors in convenience level to cost of permit, offering guaranteed specific spaces for deans, etc. at a highest premium, guaranteed space lots for a next highest fee, unreserved gated lots at medium fee, near perimeter lots at low fee, and distant perimeter lots with bus or van service at lowest fee

Special cases. . Most universities also have considerable amount of construction and maintenance going on at any point in the year, which can lead to loss of parking spots. To be fairly compensated for this temporary loss of property, the university can charge off campus workers for parking on other UGA properties same as on campus workers, particularly. collecting fees from Athletic Association for game week parking privileges and any monies they collect for football parking. This can be used to keep the overall permit cost low, but does little to alleviate congestion problems at peak times during the day.

Handicapped parking usually does not contribute to significant lack of parking for the rest of the university, though it does limit the total number of truly prime spots that would otherwise be available. Some parking spaces near steep slopes or uneven ground are dangerous to those on crutches, in wheelchairs or using a cane, and it is possible that too few or too many handicapped spaces are found near a given building. Whatever system is put in place for managing parking spots throughout the rest of university needs to also be implemented for handicaps zones.

Unlike the rest of the parking spots, since the total number of handicapped spots will always be much smaller, regulation and punishment of parking spot usage must be much more stringent for these limited spaces than it for the others. It is essential that handicapped spaces be always clearly marked, a steep fine given to non handicapped vehicles parked in handicapped parking spaces, careful surveillance to make sure that temporary handicapped tags are not expired. An alternative and very effective

approach is to create a central, covered handicapped parking area (transfer station) with van service readily available for faculty/staff as well as students [8].

Conclusions. Determining what the price for parking should be is also critical for the regulation of parking usage and avoidance of the problem of not enough parking at peak hours but too much parking at off peak hours. The right price balances the demand for parking—which varies over time—with the fixed supply of spaces. If prices are kept just high enough to keep a few spaces vacant at every location, drivers can always find a vacant space near their destination. The theory behind this approach is to ration a scarce resource, *not* to finance the cost of constructing it. This along with other suggestions mentioned above are the currently accepted approaches to solving most university campus parking shortages.

## References

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