Campus User groups are usually quite surprised by the cost of
construction when they are first involved in an institutional
project on campus. This is largely due to their familiarity with
residential construction and lack of familiarity with commercial
construction. Home construction can result in construction
costs between $150/square foot to $250/square foot whereas
work on campus can range between $500/square foot to
$1200/square foot; substantially higher. Why is this?

There are many factors that result in higher construction
cost on campus. At a casual glance, many of our projects are
technically intensive laboratory spaces which involve very
expensive mechanical and electrical infrastructure that
supports these types of spaces. Other spaces such as new
classrooms require extensive audio video equipment and
robust finishes that will last 20 years under very heavy
conditions.

Not so obvious, but more to why the cost are so different is
the gap in building science involved in commercial
construction compared to residential construction.

Building codes pertaining to commercial buildings are a
great deal more complex and intensive to ensure the
utmost life/safety measures are in place to the public. This
includes fire wall construction, seismic standards, sprinkler
systems, fire alarm systems, standard lighting outputs,
robust ventilation systems to name a few areas that are
lacking in residential specs. Institutional, commercial
buildings are actually fairly complex.

Given this level of complexity there is extensive
engineering design and government review prior to building
a commercial project; all of which impacts cost, but
ensures a high level of safety, building sustainability, and
comfort inherent to the commercial building that will last
many, many years.

Below is a fun pictorial that illustrates what a typical
house might require if used on campus.

BELOW IS A FUN PICTORIAL THAT ILLUSTRATES WHAT A TYPICAL HOUSE MIGHT REQUIRE IF USED ON CAMPUS.