**NEWS ARTICLE**

AECOM officially hands over three SPU campuses in Kimberley

**14 December 2022:** Globally trusted infrastructure firm [AECOM](http://www.aecom.com) has officially handed over the three Sol Plaatje University (SPU) campuses in Kimberley in the Northern Cape, one of the largest infrastructure projects undertaken in South Africa in recent times, where it provided programme management services. Project Manager **Chris de Billot**, who is currently managing the final building projects being handed over, will remain on-site next year to oversee the final defects period.

“Over the last three-and-a-half years we have completed 75 individual projects spread over the three campuses, deploying eight project managers and a massive support team. At any one time, we had 20 to 25 projects running simultaneously,” highlights Project Delivery Manager **Toit Scheepers**, who has been involved with the project since 2019.

The SPU precinct comprises a North, Central and South campus. The North Campus contains most of the administrative buildings, while the South Campus is mainly a residential and sports precinct. “We are currently completing what is known as Framework 2,” adds de Billot.

There is a remaining erf that will be developed for Framework 3 at a later stage. Due to the sheer scale of the project, it has been a unique showcase for AECOM’s programme management capabilities. Describing it as a “paperwork intensive project,” Scheepers says AECOM’s involvement with the longstanding project finally came to an end when it was recently handed over.

In a framework context, the client – in this case, SPU – issues a framework agreement, following which AECOM managed the procurement process, whereafter SPU appointed the necessary contractors and consultants. As a Greenfield project, a project manager was involved with every single project. As there was no infrastructure to service what was outlined, the service buildings containing the chiller plants and standby generators, water purification plants, fire booster pumps and water tanks came first. At the same time, all bulk services such as non-potable water, data, Thermally Activated Building Structures (TABS) and greywater and roads were installed.

“We had to look holistically at the precinct. Our task as programme manager was to oversee the bigger picture, refine it and then hand over individual projects as completed,” says Scheepers. “It was a massive, complex and very busy programme.”

The project was guided by a masterplan compiled by an urban landscape architect, based on the central idea of having a ‘university city’ within Kimberley itself and aligned with the principles, standards and processes of the Department of Higher Education and Training. This thinking guided the decision to split the precinct into three main campuses.

The programme management methodology, adopted by AECOM, followed a block design, whereby every framework with its distinct facilities and buildings was signed off. “Our task was to look at the sequencing and ensure it remained within budget, while at the same time adhering to the requirements of the masterplan,” says Scheepers.

“It was a bit of a juggling act given the scale, and some of the plan was modified as we progressed. However, there was constant interaction between us as the programme manager, the rest of the professional team, the client and other stakeholders.” Scheepers says AECOM was even able to introduce value engineering elements such as a common specification that guided the professional design teams to have standardised finishes and services on all buildings. This assisted in ensuring the future maintenance of all facilities will be similar.

Project Manager **Natasha Pillay**, who attained her professional registration while working on the SPU precinct, says that community upliftment in terms of AECOM’s Sustainable Legacies strategy played a critical role. “We placed a great emphasis on involving all local stakeholders. From day one we involved the local community to create a pool of labour from which the contractors could meet their requirements and select people to be further upskilled. We managed to employ 80% local people for the project duration, which ensures a tangible legacy of skills for the community.”

Commenting on the successful outcome of the SPU precinct, Scheepers concludes: “There are always hiccups on a project of this complexity. Of the 75 projects we undertook, only three experienced issues. However, we managed them, and they all came through at the end of the day and we delivered a remarkable, socially important project for this area of South Africa.”

**Pull quote**

“We as a team have planted trees but will never be able to sit in their shade. However, future generations will enjoy this shade and hopefully also plant their own trees.” – **Toit Scheepers**, Project Delivery Manager, AECOM

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#AECOM has officially handed over the three Sol Plaatje University (SPU) campuses in Kimberley in the Northern Cape, one of the largest infrastructure projects undertaken in South Africa in recent times, where it provided project management services. #SustainableLegacies

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**Notes to the editor**

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