

**Concurrent Session C**  
**Monday 12 September 2016**  
**1:30pm – 2:20pm**



**Session 6**

**Transforming the Campus Heart: Flinders University's Physical and Cultural Change**

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*Flinders University, Woods Bagot*

*Juan Smith is a Campus Planner at Flinders University with 15 years in the built environment area of tertiary education sector. As a key member of the Flinders University Student Hub project team Juan has spent the past 3 years focusing on student engagement, stakeholder management, retail development and integrated art.*

*Jo Dane is a principal with Woods Bagot working within the Education Sector with a specific focus on Education Consulting. Jo's passion is finding ways to improve the student experience, through the combined pillars of pedagogy, design and technology. Jo is an active researcher having consistently published papers and presented at conferences for over 10 years. On the Flinders University Student Hub project Jo was actively involved in consulting with a variety of stakeholder groups and building upon the Fuller engagement outcomes to develop the Return Design Brief and schematic design.*

In 2013 Flinders University committed to the creation of a 'Student Hub', at its main Campus at Bedford Park, with an aim to dramatically improve the student experience on campus. Since its opening in February 2016, this project not only delivered a premium facility, it is socially and culturally transforming the heart of the campus.

Aligning with Flinders strategic priorities to "build supportive communities", "enhance the student experience" and be "...the University that engages" the Hub project is a demonstration of delivering these strategic priorities from 'Rhetoric to reality'.

Since Flinders University opened its doors in March 1966, the central plaza and surrounding buildings had remained relatively unchanged. The facilities became outdated and no longer met the needs of current day students. Social spaces, food, beverage and retail spaces in the central campus also became tired and no longer met the demands of students or staff. Expansion of faculties and professional divisions had, over the years, absorbed much of the open access student spaces.

The aim of the Student Hub project was to give space back to students, creating a dynamic, vibrant campus heart that encouraged students to spend more time on campus. The Hub, designed by award winning architects Woods Bagot, has become a destination where students, staff and community can learn, work and play.

Determined to keep the project student focused, an in-depth student engagement process was undertaken by consulting firm Fuller. Engagement with students occurred via face-to-face focus groups, online surveys, social media & 'your say' response walls, resulting in more than 3000 responses that hugely benefited the project and informed the design of the Student Hub. A strong stakeholder engagement program continued through the life of the project with students, staff and the community.

Completion of the Student Hub was timed to coincide with the University's 50th Anniversary celebrations, providing a promotional opportunity and positioning the Student Hub as a 'launch-pad' for Flinders University into the next 50 years.

The executive mandate to complete construction in time for the anniversary gave the project team a leadership opportunity to drive significant change, offering both challenges and opportunities. Examples include: a full review of the student services delivery model which required cooperation of disparate and siloed service areas. Development of a new retail model drove change for the current operators and led to experimentation with pop-up food vans. Integrated project art pulled together staff, students, contractors and indigenous groups. The need to manage disruption during construction resulted in a comms campaign that has been awarded 'Best Issues/Crisis Communication Award' from Universities Australia Marketing Communication & Development Awards 2015. The challenges of the project enabled Flinders to enjoy a level of cross-campus collaboration not previously experienced.

The completed Hub building consists of 11,500m<sup>2</sup>, over 3 floors, comprising new food & beverage outlets, student kitchen, a variety of informal student learning amenities, student recreation spaces, student association offices, student bar, restaurant, amphitheatre, roof terrace and function rooms.

Although physically complete and operational, work remains ongoing to ensure the Hub meets its strategic objectives. The Hub continues as an exercise in 'place making' through space activation, space curation, event management and facilities management. Designed by architects Woods Bagot and constructed by Lendlease the completed Student Hub was officially opened at Flinders University 50th Anniversary on March 18, 2016.

