

## ASU Poly site looking more like a college campus

by *Emily Gersema* - Jul. 24, 2008 02:00 PM  
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Arizona State University has occupied the old Williams Air Force Base on the border of Mesa and Gilbert for more than a decade, and finally, it looks less like a military site and more like a college campus.

This month, in time for the fall semester's start, ASU Polytechnic will officially open a cluster of buildings that house classrooms, faculty and administrative offices, labs and even a black box theater for students interested in drama, music and other fine arts.

ASU Polytechnic's look "has greatly changed," said Lew Laws, the project manager for DPR Construction. "Especially with these buildings because they're right in the center. They certainly don't look military."

The boxy brick edifices are called Santa Catalina, Peralta, Picacho and Santan halls. Together, they'll double the space for students and faculty at the campus whose programs include the Morrison School of Management and Agribusiness, along with education, arts and sciences and engineering.

The buildings were constructed with a number of materials extracted and recycled from the old military base - appropriate for ASU which now touts its programs as promoting sustainability in this energy-conscious era.

DPR Construction of Phoenix is finishing up the \$103 million project whose chief architect was RSP Architects of Tempe. Lake Flato and Ten Eyck Landscape Architects also had a hand in changing the military look of the campus, adding a series of desert plants whose blossoms and greenery soften the industrial look of the structures.

Laws said workers pulled up about 3,200 tons of asphalt to create benches and other concrete surfaces.

In all, the firm prevented about 90 percent of the unearthed and demolished materials at the site from going to landfills, incorporating them into the structures.

DPR, which focuses on environmentally-sound and energy-efficient construction, is pursuing the top national certification for "green" construction - LEED, or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. To obtain any of LEED's certified, silver, gold or platinum ratings, the structures and their materials must fulfill a very stringent set of criteria for "green" building.

The three-story structures near the Memorial Union span about 240,000 square feet and evoke a contemporary ambiance, with wood panels and metal supports exposed over the walkways in a modern industrial style. The crisp exterior lines insinuate that the interior will be filled with the no-nonsense, sharp-lined metal and pale wood furniture like those crafted in Sweden or the Netherlands.

Boxes resembling tree houses pop out of the northern corners and loom over walkways. These are actually conference rooms for administrative and staff meetings. One is powered entirely by solar energy.

The tall brick-red buildings are linked by shaded walkways, metal staircases and sidewalks that also act as fire lanes. On the far east side sits a mini theatre with stone and concrete benches.

Surface materials such as varnishes, paints and carpets for the rooms have low VOC ratings, meaning they have very low toxic emissions.

The process for obtaining a LEED certificate will take several more months. Laws said that while the project likely will fulfill the standards for the silver rating, the firm is hoping to exceed that and get gold, just as it did for the ASU Biodesign Institute project in Tempe a few years ago.