



## Balfour Beatty beefs up US campus unit amid PPP push

**Balfour Beatty Campus Solutions wants to take PPPs in the US higher education market beyond the student housing niche and has hired Jim Short as senior vice president to support the effort.**

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Balfour Beatty Campus Solutions, a division of UK developer Balfour Beatty, is gearing up to educate US public and private universities on the benefits of using public-private partnerships for more than just building student housing.

As part of a strategy that involves financing various construction projects at US public and private universities and colleges, the firm has hired Jim G. Short to the newly created position of senior vice president.

Short, who started on January 3 and joins from Campus Living Villages, is located in Houston, Texas and reports to Bob Shepko, division president of Balfour Beatty Campus Solutions. "His knowledge in the higher education sector is critical to helping us grow in that space," Shepko told *Infrastructure Investor*.

Over the past 12 months, Balfour Beatty Campus Solutions has been exploring opportunities for the expansion of the PPP model in the higher education segment, strategically positioning half a dozen professionals around the US to implement this strategy.

As it stands, the firm is still devoting much of its time to informing schools about PPPs and identifying where this structure can thrive, but the team is also actively discussing how to implement these partnerships in new ways. Where Balfour Beatty Campus solutions is breaking new ground is in pairing colleges and universities with the private sector for projects that go beyond traditional student housing PPPs:

"The great thing and what makes this so exciting to all of us is that we are exploring academic buildings as well as student support buildings, such as student union recreation centres, convocation centres and some larger projects on campus," noted Shepko. He added that "other asset classes on campus" procured via the PPP model could include parking garages, laboratory spaces as well as student, academic and administrative buildings.

"We've looked at that industry and how some of the lessons learned can help us in other asset classes," he said, adding that the worth of projects spans the spectrum up to hundreds of millions of dollars on the high end.

The catalyst for more PPPs in higher education is a need for creative financing amid budget constraints at universities and other headwinds. "What's happening is public funding from state and federal sources, private donations and fundraising are not able to keep up with the required maintenance and increasing needs of the campus stakeholders, including the administration, faculty and students," said Shepko.

In addition to Short, Balfour Beatty Campus Solutions also hired Josh E. Smith as vice president in Dallas, Texas in November.

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