



### **PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS FOR THE PERIOD 02 JULY 2007–07 JULY 2008**

#### **Introduction**

The Association of Schools of Construction of Southern Africa (ASOCSA) was officially launched on 20 June at the culmination of the First Built Environment Conference. The concept and launch of ASOCSA was supported by industry demonstrated by substantial sponsorships from prominent stakeholders such as Group 5, the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), and PPC Cement.

ASOCSA is not the first attempt to form a body that addresses, *inter alia*, matters of construction education and training. In the days of the then Building Industries Federation South Africa (BIFSA) and the National Development Fund (NDF) there were regular annual meetings of the Heads of Departments that offered construction-related programmes. Recognising the two-tiered higher education sector, there were separate meetings for universities and the former technikons. In the more recent past, the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) initially convened annual educators' forums that did not quite fulfill the same function as the previous forums. However, during 2005 the very first meeting of university Heads of Departments drawn from all higher education institutions in South Africa met for the very first time since the re-landscaping of the sector in the same venue to discuss matters affecting construction, and particularly construction education in the country. This meeting was repeated in 2006 where the need was expressed for the establishment of a formal forum / association of universities to engage in discussion / debate / collaboration / promotion of matters of mutual interest.

ASOCSA aims to be the professional association for the development and advancement of construction education in Southern Africa, where the sharing of ideas and knowledge inspires, guides and promotes excellence in curricula, teaching, research and service, the disciplines concerned being construction economics, construction management, construction project management, and construction surveying. To achieve this aim ASOCSA will partner with the construction industry seeking to represent the interests of both construction academic and industry practitioners interested in institutional construction education. Further, ASOCSA has committed itself to foster excellence in construction communication, scholarship, research, education, and practice.

#### **Membership**

The founding institutions include the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, the University of Johannesburg, and the University of Witwatersrand. The University of Pretoria joined the founding institutions to form a steering committee, and the University of the Free State is also represented on the Council along with the aforementioned.

#### **Registration as a Section 21 Company**

During the period under review, ASOCSA registered as a Section 21 company. I wish to thank Dr Hendrik Marx for his efforts in expediting this process.

## **Outreach and Public Relations**

During July 2007 I visited the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) in London while undertaking a conference and research related visit to the United Kingdom. Various matters such as participation by ASOCSA in RICS accreditation of South African programmes, and at a later stage, Southern African programmes, endorsement of conferences organised under the auspices of ASOCSA by the RICS, recognition of ASOCSA conferences in terms of the RICS's CPD, and accreditation of South African coursework Masters programmes by the RICS, and at a later stage, Southern African programmes, were discussed.

During June 2008 I initiated communications with the Copper Belt University, Zambia, with a view to initiating ASOCSA's outreach into Africa, and the facilitating of The Fourth Built Environment Conference outside of South Africa. During August a visit will be undertaken to Zambia.

During June 2008 Professor Theo Haupt promoted ASOCSA and discussed the development of relationships between ASOCSA and the built environment communities in Tanzania and Lesotho, while visiting the Ardhi University, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Lerothle Polytechnic, Maseru, Lesotho, respectively, while undertaking academic moderation visits thereto.

ASOCSA has approached the South African Council of the Construction Management Professions (SACPCMP) with a view to becoming recognised as a Voluntary Association (VA). Documentation is currently being prepared for submission.

To date, two ASOCSA / Industry forums were hosted by ASOCSA, one in Cape Town on 21 May 2008 and one in Johannesburg on 29 May 2008. Further forums will be hosted in Bloemfontein, Durban, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, and Pretoria. The forums are directed towards enabling interaction between tertiary education and the industry, and ultimately, the effective integration of students, diplomats, and graduates into the industry.

The establishment of ASOCSA's web site during late June 2008 reflects further progress in terms of the public relations function. This achievement was synchronised with the pending Third Built Environment Conference. As at Saturday 5 July, the site had registered just over 6 000 visits.

## **Tertiary education**

On 24 April 2008 ASOCSA hosted a meeting of the Heads of Departments associated with ASOCSA, which meeting enabled the respective Heads to interact and to discuss strategy relative to a range of issues.

## **Bursary Fund**

A bursary fund was established during 2008, the cede amount being R 25 000.00. The bursary fund is intended to support postgraduate studies relative to construction economics, construction management, construction project management, and construction surveying. The fund is aimed at supporting such studies based upon meritorious proposals.

## **Accreditation**

Three Councillors, namely Professor Theo Haupt, Mr Ferdinand Fester, and Mr Rob Newberry have been co-opted onto the SACPCMP accreditation panel accompanying the CIOB accreditation panel visit to tertiary institutions offering BSc 'Construction Management' programmes during August 2008.

## **Conferences**

Scientific conferences constitute a medium and opportunity for the promotion of built environment research and the development of the related bodies of knowledge, in addition to providing continuing professional development (CPD). Furthermore, appropriately structured conferences can promote interaction between practitioners and academia, a further objective of ASCOSA, without detracting from the scientific status of

such conferences. The First Built Environment Conference staged in Sandton in 2006, the Second in Port Elizabeth in 2007, and the Third currently being staged in Cape Town, included key note addresses by leading built environment practitioners representing various stakeholder groups. Furthermore, a range of scientific papers were presented and included in the published conference proceedings, which were recognised for subsidy by the South African Department of Education. During 2009, The Fourth Built Environment Conference will be staged in Livingstone, Zambia, within close proximity of the Victoria Falls. The Copper Belt University, Zambia, will assist with the preparations for this 'Southern African' conference. Thereafter, a future conference will be staged in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Yet again, I wish to thank Professor Theo Haupt, for his editorship of the conference proceedings, and he and Mr Ferdinand Fester, for their sponsorship efforts relative to the three Built Environment Conferences. Further thanks are due to the respective Scientific Committees, and to the members of the Council of ASOCSA for their supporting contributions.

## **Publications**

The publication of the *Journal of Construction*, which has a circulation of approximately 5 000, is yet a further achievement on the part of ASOCSA in terms of its contribution to the promotion of built environment research and the development of the related bodies of knowledge. Volume 1 Number 1 was first distributed at The Second Built Environment Conference in June 2007, and Volume 1 Number 2 was distributed in February 2008. Furthermore, the distribution of Volume 2 Number 1 upon the staging of The Third Built Environment Conference today 7 July 2008 is appropriate as the achievement replicates the achievement relative to the staging of The First Built Environment Conference. Furthermore, this achievement enables the submission of the three issues to the DoE with the objective of it being recognised for DoE subsidy. I wish to thank the Editor of the Journal of Construction, Professor Theo Haupt, for his editorship and leadership, and his sponsorship efforts relative to the journal.

## **Financial Status**

ASOCSA is in a financially stable state, revenue being primarily attributable to conference fees and conference sponsorship. It should be noted that ASOCSA has funded the publication of two of the three issues of the *Journal of Construction*. Given that ASOCSA is a Section 21 Company, in theory it should not realise a financial surplus.

## **The future**

The following constitute potential focus errors:

- Increasing the circulation of the *Journal of Construction*
- Increasing the number of delegates attending The Built Environment Conference
- Increasing the Southern African flavour of ASOCSA
- The development of better practice tertiary built environment education guidelines

**Professor John Smallwood**  
**President**