# Transcript for the City of Ohio State Podcast Season 3 Episode 6: FITS with Joe Porostosky

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The City of Ohio State podcast takes a deep dive into the support services that keep OSU's Columbus campus running 24/7. Hear from industry experts in facilities, construction, real estate, public safety, transportation and more. The City of Ohio State podcast is brought to you by the Office of Administration and Planning. Go Bucks.

Hello and welcome to the City of Ohio State Podcast. I'm Brooke McKivergan in for Dan Hedman. On the last episode, we heard from leaders across A&P who make Ohio State game days a safe and fun experience for all. This month, we're pulling the curtain back on a department that does most of its work behind the scenes, or up in the sky. Joe Porostosky is the director of Facilities, Information and Technology Services or FITS. Joe, thanks for being with us. I'm excited to be here with you today. Great. So for those who may not be familiar with FITS, can you briefly describe the work you and your team do? Yeah. I think in a nutshell, we're here to help our customers and our users to make better decisions more quickly. We have a lot of tools, a lot of data, and that's our goal. We want to help our customers make better decisions more quickly. And we have three different areas in which we do this. Our first part of our team is the architectural team, and they manage 3D models of all of our buildings, our floor plans They also provide room numbering for all of our projects on campus, and they provide access to all of our construction documentation after all of the other projects we do on campus, we also have our data team and they manage our SIMS, our space information and management system. And that system takes all those floor plans and mashes it up with all sorts of data about all of our spaces, like how is that space being used and who's in that space? And we do a lot of walking across campus to keep all that data up to, up to up to current to make sure it's accurate On top of that, do they do a lot of reporting, a lot of standardized reporting, like some state reporting and some federal reporting on top of a lot of just customized reporting, people asking, hey, I want the data sliced and diced a certain way. We also do a lot of increasingly customized and complex reporting where we're taking data from a bunch of different data sources, combining it together, building some very interesting dashboards or reports. Again, we're trying to help people, you know, make decisions about data in ways that make it easier to understand what they're looking at so they can make decisions about it. Then the last area is our gas department, which is geographic information systems. Think of that as mapping and our campus mapping solutions. Google Maps on Steroids. Another way to think about it, one of the new solutions we just put out, you can find it at maps.osu.edu, it's a new public campus map. If you go there, you're going to see a pretty simple map. It's our base map. It's the most basic kinds of information that we store and that we we maintain about the information about this campus. But we have a lot more information that we maintain things like dumpsters and benches and pavement types and tree info that's just kind of scratching the surface of the kinds of information that we maintain. But it's not just that kind of information. We also help others maintain information, not just outdoor information, like I just mentioned, but also informed interior information, things like shut off valves, electrical panel information or the location of ads or time blocks. So we don't just have data that we maintain, but we have this entire system that makes it easy for others to go out and collect their own information. Really impressive stuff. And the drone team is super impressive as well. So can you talk about how drone aerials help support the operation of the entire campus? Yeah. What's interesting is, you know, I mentioned we have all this data, all these different tools that I mentioned in each one of these different teams has different ways of making sure that we keep our data very current. It's really important that when people come to use our tools, interact with our data, that they can trust it. And one of the ways that our GIS team does that, making sure that base map is always current is through drone imagery in one of the most important ways they do that is through the use of the wing drone. And this winter drone, if you ever see it on campus, it's this small orange airplane looking thing and it can take imagery of the entire Columbus campus in about three days. And we like to do a full imagery of Columbus campus twice a year, once when the leaves are on the tree trees and once the leaves are off the tree. Now, when the leaves are off the tree, that's actually a little bit more valuable for us because then we can see where all the sidewalks are, where the the roads are at. But we get different types of information, obviously, from both of those. But, you know, the campus changes very often. And we want to make sure that we're getting very current information about the campus. On top of that, we fly one at least one of the regional campuses every year. We try to get up to a second regional every year also. The whole point, again, is to ensure that our base members, as current as we can get it so that users can trust our data and that they can, when they come in, interact with any of our mapping tools, our data. It's going to be current. It's going to be useful for them. I got my drone license probably two years ago. And after that, I have a newfound respect for drone pilots because that stuff is not easy. So kudos to your team for that. Also, your team provides free virtual trainings on topics from GIS to building information modeling and space information and management systems and more. So how could someone use these trainings in real life? I mentioned that the whole point of what we do with all of our tools, with all of our data, it's all about helping users make better decisions more quickly. And we'd love it if if people came to our tools and said, Boy, these tools are so simple to use that I don't need any additional help. But that's not always reality. And some of our tools can be a little harder to use and others. And so we want to make sure people can use our tools, our systems, our data the most effectively as they can. And so we want to provide all sorts of opportunities for them to become more proficient in these tools. So some of our virtual trainings are simply introductory, and some of the ones that some of the some of these opportunities are ones that we provide to the entire university community. And it's just, hey, come check out all the different systems we have. And then if you're interested, if you're like, hey, these are some interesting things that I might be able to use in my work life. Then we offer some basic trainings and some of our tools, and then some more advanced trainings, each one of our tools. And beyond that, though, we are always open to one-on-one trainings whenever somebody wants it, we get lots of requests for that from I just want some very handy. I want some handholding on this tool too. I'm new and I want some onboarding help and I'm don't want to wait till your next virtual training. And so we're here to help people get their proficiency and our tools up to speed, because, again, we want people to be able to use our tools effectively so that they can do their job more effectively, especially as it interacts with our tools and our data. And speaking of building information modeling, can you go into some more detail about that and how you're working to transition all campus buildings to 3D models? You know, we could talk about this one probably all day, of course. But over 15 years ago, we started investigating this idea of transitioning. All of these 2D floor planes we had into 3D models. It was a new technology then, and we did a bunch of research, talk to a bunch of experts. We even talked to one other university that was starting this kind of adventure into this idea of transitioning. But then about 14 years ago, we actually took the plunge and said, we're going to start converting all of these 2D, AutoCAD based Floorplans we had into 3D Revit based building models. It started in the Med Center, and this spring, after 14 years, we're going to complete our last couple of buildings. While 40 million square feet in Rabat, which is about 675 of our buildings. Now. There's a lot of benefits from this. And again, there's more than I could even I would even have time to talk about in this podcast today. But some of the benefits we have a 3-D understanding of our buildings instead of just being a 2D, you know, just lines on an electronic piece of paper. We have a 3D model of that building. We understand the placement of windows. We can see the exterior of a building. We understand the heights of of a from ceiling to floor. We have a they're more accurate for plants because we re walked every single building. We have richer data about our buildings. We have a much more complete understanding of what's going on within our buildings. And we can understand more complex. We can answer more complex questions about our buildings. For instance, we can count the total number of plumbing fixtures in a building, not just in that building, but in the entire campus because these are not just, as I mentioned, lines on an electronic piece of paper, but these 3D models are essentially little databases of information about these buildings. Another question that's come up in the past is adding up the total square footage of exterior glass on all of the buildings on campus. And these are just the beginnings of some of the questions we've been able to answer. So there are a lot of interesting use cases now that we have all these buildings within a three dimensional footprint. And because of our scale. One of the more interesting things is that we are likely one of the largest managers of 3D models anywhere in the world, and that allows us to really investigate and play around with some interesting use cases and be able to kind of push the limits of what is possible with having this amount of 3D models. That's amazing that your team helps gather this essential data. And congratulations on that milestone. That's really cool. So about two years ago, FITS broke away from planning, architecture and real estate repair, becoming its own sort of entity. So can you explain how this helped your team reach a larger audience and expand further across campus? No. FITS grew substantially under Perry. It was a very good environment for us. But a number of years ago, a couple of things came kind of became apparent to us. First, we needed a better funding model for FITS. But on top of that, it was it was kind of a became apparent that we'd be probably better served if we were more of a shared service as opposed to being part of a unit. And I would I'll be very honest, this is definitely due to a man and his leadership and their vision that they encouraged FITS to think about this, to consider this. And I'm very grateful for that. There's definitely due to their push. Now, it's not that we were not serving the entire university before because we were. But being very explicit that we were a shared service. I do think that that is definitely enhanced our ability to serve the university. I think there's a there was definitely a perception shift when we became officially a shared service. And I think part of part of what we've also done is connected to this as we've really tried to improve our level of communication with the entire university community. That was definitely part of it, making sure that everybody knew we are here and advertising our services, advertising a lot of our trainings that we talked about earlier. It's been a big push of what we tried to do as part of this move to a shared service. And I'm always surprised by how many people still don't know that we exist. And so we are finding new users, new customers all the time and finding ways to help them do their jobs better through using our services, using our tools, using our data. And so it's always really valuable for us to continue marketing, helping them understand where we can come in and assist them. Hopefully, the podcast leads to a new customer for you guys and someone finding out how your team can help them. So a big part of your work includes the team of student interns. So how are those interns involved in fits operations? And if someone's listening and is interested, how can they get involved? Yeah, we're super passionate about having students on our team because we really do feel it's part of our mission to provide students the skills they need to be effective in their future professional lives. We love giving students very practical skills that they are going to be able to take and use in their future. At the same time, we really like getting high quality work done. So it's it's it's both. It's it's a win win. Every team in Fitz has student staff, so every team is utilizing fit students. And we have anywhere between 12 and 14 students working for us at any one time and they are doing the meat of what we do. So when we talked about this whole transition from 2D floor plans to 3D models, students, did that work. Now they're oversee, overseen by full time staff who are kind of quality checking their work, that they are actually the ones converting the models and building those models. They're also the ones that are doing a lot of the work of updating models following renovations happening on campus. They are also the ones that are updating the base map. When they get that drone imagery, they're checking for changes and updating our base map. They're helping adding new construction documents into Sims. They're also taking 360 photos and adding those to Sims and lots of other things. So we're there doing valuable work for us, and that's super important to us. We know that's boosting their resume. We know that's helping them to get really good jobs when they leave here. And on top of that, it's supporting their academic work. It's taking the work that they're doing in the classroom. It's making it super practical for them and it's allowing them to to take with them into their work world. Practical skills that's gonna allow them to succeed. Now, if they're interested in working for us, a lot of our jobs start at the very beginning of the summer, and so we do a lot of our hiring in the spring. Now there are also other positions. Sometimes we have vacancies throughout the year, so we do hired other times. If anybody's ever interested, they can always go to FITS.osu.edu, sort of see the website, they can use the Contact Us page and they can just let us know, Hey, I'm interested in any one of your positions and we'll make sure to contact you whenever we're hiring again. Joey, so appreciate the work of you and your team and for your time today. Thank you so much for being with us. Hey, I really enjoyed talking to you about all the great work the meeting does. The City of Ohio State podcast is brought to you by the Office of Administration Planning. Until next time, be kind and go Bucks!