

ACS, Inc. Thrives

ACS, Inc., headquartered in Madison Wisconsin, is an international integrated services firm dedicated to delivering design and construction solutions for complex research in engine and vehicle testing, green building, science and technology and the consumer products markets. With an international client base largely comprised of Fortune 100 and Fortune 500 companies, ACS and its strategic partners (including Madison Region firms Flad Architects and Affiliated Engineers, Inc) are world leaders in specialized solutions for clients across science, technology and manufacturing.

ACS has played a leading role in the upgrade of many of the diesel industry's emissions testing facilities; their major clients include firms such as Caterpillar, Cummins, Daimler Truck, General Electric, International Truck and Engine, and John Deere.

“One of our strong ties to that work is our staff,” says ACS president Jim Corkery. “We have several people from the UW-Madison Mechanical Engineering Department, several with Masters degrees focused on diesel engine research, something the UW is known for. We actually competed with some of our clients for these people—they were really heavily recruited—but they liked the quality of life here, and that was a strong recruitment tool for us.” Principal of Business Development Scott Hoselton agrees. “The quality of life here strongly affects our ability to recruit; people come here from outside the region and they really enjoy it.”

Hoselton adds that he believes a major retention factor for ACS is their corporate culture. “We have a strong sense of autonomy here; while we work in specific areas of expertise, there's a lot of freedom to learn new things, to develop professionally, and to really utilize an entrepreneurial spirit, as opposed to task related, traditional engineering. We really recruit for that.”

With work that is focused on technically complex projects, says Corkery, “Our firm is unique in that over 50% of our people are engineers; most construction companies have very few. We are good at integrating research equipment with facilities, and very strong in systems integration because we have an understanding of what the owner is trying to achieve. Our specialty is being able to integrate specialized equipment with the owners' goals and with the building. We bring design, construction and equipment integration together and make it work well.”

Hoselton adds that a distinguishing factor for ACS is the unique mix of engineers on staff, including mechanical (acoustics and vibrations testing, machine design, HVAC systems) and electrical (for instrumentation, controls, power and lighting), all working with ProEngineering systems in 3-D modeling.

While ACS has maintained a strong national and international client base over the past 14 years, they are now beginning to sharpen their focus on regional projects. Says Corkery, “We now have the resources for a wider view, and we see more opportunities in the region than ever before, allowing us to pursue work here. The startups, the University

Research Park and incubator spaces, the organizations moving to the region; there's a lot of work in Wisconsin."

Some of the projects closer to home include the Kettle Foods facilities, an \$11 million, 68,000 square-foot manufacturing plant and 5,700 sq.-ft. office building in Beloit, Wisconsin. Finished in 2007, the Kettle Foods facility is the first LEED gold-certified manufacturing facility in Wisconsin (second in the nation, after PepsiCo). "Green building is a strong focus for us," says Hoselton, who adds that "our Madison location allows us to be at one of the centers of this philosophy."

A major project now underway in the science and technology arena is the Institute for Influenza Viral Research on the University Research Park campus, a \$12 million laboratory built for UW Madison-based research Yoshihiro Kawaoka and his research team. The 30,000 square-foot, Biosafety Level 3-Agriculture facility represents the highest biocontainment research lab of its kind on the UW Madison campus, serving as a model for future collaborations between the university and the research park.

The work of ACS is supported by a 23,000 sq. ft. fabrication facility in Verona, Wisconsin, allowing the company to build specialty equipment that is not readily purchased, including items such as multiple engine production test stands for John Deere, transmission test stands for Caterpillar, fuel conditioning systems for Cummins, and specialty electrical panels for Hamilton Sundstrand.

With major international clients and projects, why does ACS choose to remain in the Madison Region? "We have the resources here," says Corkery. Strong strategic partners, with ties to science and technology focused companies; research and development; hospitals and companies with great design knowledge. "This is our only office. We're here for all these reasons, but also because of the quality of life. It's a great place to live, to raise a family; the location makes it easy to recruit. We travel all over the world and see all these places to live— and Madison is a pretty desirable place to come home to."