BUILDING TOMORROW’S CONSTRUCTION LEADERS TODAY

BUILDS

CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, CHICO

JIM O’BANNON RETIRES

MARY POULIN THE HEARTBEAT

JUSTIN BESOTES SPEAKS
MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Greetings from all of us in the Department of Construction Management (CM) at CSU, Chico.

By way of Introduction, I have succeeded Rovane Younger as chair of the CM department. Though he has retired, Rovane has not stepped away entirely and will continue to teach CM classes on a part-time basis for the next several years. We appreciate his continued service.

Since assuming this leadership role, I have been particularly grateful for three things: the dedication and commitment of the faculty who continue to make this an outstanding program, the impressive accomplishments of our alumni, and the strong support that we receive from our industry sponsors.

In this inaugural issue of the department’s biannual newsletter, we are pleased to feature several stories that highlight the accomplishments of our students, faculty, and staff. First and foremost, this issue features Mary Poulin, who is likely the most recognized celebrity in the CM program. The department cannot thank her enough for coming back from retirement to assist the department temporarily while our newly hired administrative support coordinator, Mandra (Mandy) Thomas, is out on maternity leave (congratulations, Mandy!). You will learn more about Mandy in the next issue. Mary has served the construction management program for nearly 40 years and has worked with 15 different chairs. (We’ll see how I measure up …) I doubt that there has been any graduate or company recruiter whose life has not been enriched by hers.

Also featured in this newsletter is CM faculty member Jim O’Bannon, who retired after the spring 2014 semester. Jim started this program some 37 years ago and has contributed to the mission of the department on so many levels. We thank him for his many years of service and wish him the best as he moves on to a new stage of life.

This issue also features the contributions of CM faculty member David Shirah. His story outlines a career path (student to industry professional to faculty member) that some of you might like to consider. If teaching CM students is something that you may be interested in, please contact me and we can discuss the possibilities.

This issue also includes stories on the accomplishment of our students, including a piece that features recent CM graduate Justin Besotes, leader of our impressive 2014 Blitz Build project and 2014 graduation speaker for the College of Engineering, Computer Science, and Construction Management.

This is a time of unprecedented change in the administration and leadership on campus and an important time for our industry partners to help us articulate the needs, concerns, and support we receive from those who hire our graduates. If you can supply a strong voice in this arena, please contact me so that I can arrange to meet with you. Also, please consider making a financial contribution to our department to begin a partnership with us in support of:

- Student scholarships
- Student participation in competitions, professional meetings, and community service projects
- Hiring new faculty and providing existing faculty with support to attend professional meetings, access to cutting-edge technology, research opportunities, and industry internships
- Student recruiting to supply the CM graduates of the future to meet the increasing demand of the industry (my highest priority)

Beginning with the next issue of this newsletter, I would like to feature some of the many outstanding accomplishments of our alumni. If you (or someone you know) have achieved professional success or have made the world a better place through your work, please send me a short article so we can choose among the best of the best, as I am sure we could fill a book here.

The students, faculty, and staff here at Chico State’s Department of Construction Management hope that you enjoy this initial newsletter and want to wish you the best for this upcoming holiday season. Working together, we can build the CM program to meet the challenges of the construction industry by supplying high-quality, work-ready graduates.

Sincerely,
Joel Arthur
Professor and Chair
Department of Construction Management
California State University, Chico
A team of six construction management students from CSU, Chico took first place in the Preconstruction division of the 28th Annual Associated Schools of Construction (ASC) Student Competition February 5–8, 2014. The ASC Regions 6 & 7 Student Competition is the largest collegiate construction management competition in the nation, with over 175 teams from 41 different universities competing in 18 different problem categories.

Chico CM faculty member Lori Brown has served as the ASC Student Competition coordinator since 2007. Teams are presented with real-world construction management problems, and in a short amount of time they must develop and present solutions to a panel of judges.

“Placing, let alone winning, is a monumental achievement in this highly competitive competition,” says Brown.

The Chico Preconstruction team took the top prize with its response to a problem posed by competition judges that required competing teams to assume the role of general contractor in the preconstruction phase of a large project. The teams prepared and presented proposals that demonstrated effective team-building and problem-solving techniques; strong oral and written communication skills; the ability to conduct project meetings; and a solid understanding of risk analysis, quality management, site logistics, scheduling, budget development, constructability reviews, safety planning, value engineering, LEED green building certification standards, and life-cycle analysis.

The six-person team, led by CM faculty member David Shirah, included Nicholas Keith (project manager), Jake Dumenigo, Sylvana Smith, Mike Gibbons, Brandon Wallace, Thomas Ellery, and team alternate John Koch. CM faculty member Chris Souder served as advisor to the team during the competition.

Two additional Chico teams did well in the February 2014 competition. A six-member team led by Souder placed third behind Cal Poly San Luis Obispo in the Heavy Civil division, and a six-member student team led by CM faculty member Alan Bond placed third in the Commercial division.

The event is supported by a large number of leading construction companies who sponsor the general competition and serve as “problem” sponsors for each division of the competition.

“Each year, over 90 different construction industry sponsors provide the financial support required to make the event special,” Brown says.

The event provides company representatives with opportunities to meet the best and brightest students from each competing university, giving them a leg up when it comes to finding new talent for their organizations.
When most college students think of spring break, they envision themselves relaxing in the warm sun on a sandy beach with their friends. CSU, Chico construction management students think a bit differently. They strap on their tool belts and get to work.

Keeping with an annual tradition of community service, students from the College of Engineering, Computer Science, and Construction Management spent their 2014 spring break building housing for families who are transitioning out of the Salvation Army’s rehabilitation program.

The eight-day project was led by senior CM student Justin Besotes, who served as project manager leading a 20-member student leadership team. The project included nearly 200 volunteers and 20 industry suppliers, subcontractors, and sponsors and took more than a year to plan. Faculty advisors for the project were Alan Bond, Jim O’Bannon, and David Shirah.

Volunteers worked from Friday, March 14, 2014, until Friday, March 21, 2014, to construct two 1,600-square-foot, LEED-platinum-certified duplexes outfitted with high-efficiency heating and air-conditioning equipment, instantaneous water heaters, drought-tolerant landscaping, LED lighting, high-efficiency appliances, and solar electricity. Approximately 90 student volunteers and 75 community members volunteered during the build, working in shifts of 50–60 volunteers that kept the worksite humming from 6 a.m. until 10 p.m. each day to complete the project.

A number of community partners provided in-kind products and services to support the project, including: Alternative Energy Systems, CES Electrical, PG&E, Chico Sunrise Rotary, and Chico Noon Rotary. Substantial financial contributions were received from several members of the community.
After teaching and advising students for more than 35 years, construction management professor James O’Bannon retired as the spring 2014 drew to a close. His infectious enthusiasm, his dedication to the many students he has mentored, and his commitment to serving those in need will be remembered long after he teaches his last class.

O’Bannon joined the CSU, Chico faculty in 1975 and was immediately tasked with developing a construction management curriculum, an effort supported by a grant from the Associated General Contractors of America (AGC), a trade organization for the construction industry. His work led to the creation of a construction management (CM) option of the Industrial Technology undergraduate degree. In the fall of 1978, the CM option was implemented with seven declared majors. Since then the program has grown tremendously, with enrollment reaching an all-time high in 2008 of 715 majors, with 147 CM majors graduating that year.

In addition to his work on early development of the CM program and its continued growth, O’Bannon worked with external organizations to secure funding that supported research and training efforts. A recognized expert on energy efficiency, O’Bannon has authored over three dozen published technical manuals, articles, and research reports on many topics related to energy efficiency, including residential HVAC, solar technologies, and fluorescent lighting retrofit. In 1978, he secured a $1 million contract from PG&E to establish a weatherization training school in Stockton, CA. This led to similar contracts with other energy providers, including Southern California Edison and the Tennessee Valley Authority.

While O’Bannon has been recognized for excellence in teaching and for his expertise in the area of energy efficiency, he is perhaps best remembered for his leadership in mobilizing students to complete ambitious service projects in the Chico community and beyond. Beginning in 1980 with renovations of the Boy Scout Camp at Butte Meadows, a beautiful and remote area that lies approximately 35 miles northeast of Chico, O’Bannon developed numerous partnerships that provided CM students with opportunities to apply what they learn in the classroom to projects that have made the Chico community and other areas throughout the United States better places to live.

Says CM faculty member and former department chair Rovane Younger, “Jim’s behavior and tireless dedication to community service projects was a model for the students who learned organization, management, and basic trade skills, but Jim believes the most important thing they learned was the sheer joy from helping others accomplish what they could not do for themselves.”

In 2006, O’Bannon traveled with students, faculty, and staff to New Orleans to assist the victims of Hurricane Katrina in rebuilding their homes in the aftermath of one of the deadliest and most destructive Atlantic tropical cyclones in recent history. In 2007 and 2008, the project continued. More than 60 students returned to New Orleans in 2007 to continue the massive clean-up effort, and in 2008, 115 students constructed 14 homes in New Orleans over the winter break.

The tradition of community service that O’Bannon initiated back in 2006 with the New Orleans project moved closer to home in 2009 when student volunteers built 12 fire-resistant sheds for the victims of the Concow fire that burned 60,000 acres and destroyed 200 homes in a rural area 29 miles east of Chico. In 2010, students constructed the first of two transition houses for Catalyst, a local nonprofit that serves victims of domestic violence. In 2011, the students constructed two additional houses for Catalyst. In 2012, O’Bannon traveled to Missouri with student volunteers to construct homes for the victims of a catastrophic EF5 tornado that hit Joplin, Missouri and destroyed an estimated 7,000 homes. In 2013 and 2014, O’Bannon and construction management students turned their attention to Chico once again, constructing housing for those served by the local Salvation Army. Plans for the 2015 Blitz Build are underway as this story is being written.
Whether you are a student, parent, faculty member, or corporate recruiter, the first person you are likely to see when visiting the construction management program at CSU, Chico is Mary Poulin. Seated behind her desk in Langdon Hall, she has served as the program’s administrative coordinator since the program was established in the early 1970s. While Poulin officially retired in September 2013 after more than 40 years of service, she returned to campus in August 2014 to temporarily help newly hired administrative coordinator Mandy Thomas get settled in. In December, Poulin will leave her desk once more to enjoy retirement in earnest.

“Having Mary back to help the CM department and me during this time of transition has been indescribable,” says newly appointed department chair Joel Arthur. “After a year of retirement, she picked up right where she left off, helping students, faculty, and company recruiters. We can’t thank her enough for stepping up when we needed her.”

Poulin’s long tenure with the CM program began in 1971 when she was hired as a part-time temporary employee to facilitate procurement of the equipment required to outfit lab facilities that would be housed in the newly constructed Plumas Hall. The facility would provide classroom and lab space for several campus programs, including the fledgling construction management program. Two months after she accepted the part-time position, she was asked to serve as a full-time secretary. Since then, she has provided administrative support for the CM department and has served as a highly effective liaison with other offices throughout the University.

In 2002, Poulin was named CSU, Chico Staff Employee of the Year in honor of her fine work within the CM department and for volunteering countless evenings and weekends to help with campus events, including graduation activities, President’s Scholars Day, Parents Day, and scholarship award ceremonies.

“The students are my favorite part of the job,” says Poulin. “I just try to get them what they need so they can keep going.”

She gets to know them quite well as she interacts with them throughout their college years. In fact, many students begin their experience at CSU, Chico with Poulin.

“I was here in the summer,” she says, “so I would see a lot of students and their parents who would pop in.”

Over the years, Poulin has become indispensable to the many recruiters who visit Chico looking for students to fill internship placements and employment positions. For many years, she provided overall coordination of the department’s robust recruitment program which, since the mid-1990s, has worked directly with companies who employ CM students and grads. The effort has grown to include more than 60 companies who visit campus each spring. Poulin prepares the interview schedule and ensures that recruiters have a comfortable and convenient place to interview students.

Throughout her career, Poulin has worked with many CM faculty members, some of whom have been with the department nearly as long as she has. Unlike many CSU, Chico staff members, she was never tempted to take a different job on campus, citing how much she likes the CM faculty. The feeling is definitely mutual, according to faculty member Chris Souder.

“I went to the office one night around 5:45 p.m. and in passing told Mary I needed something,” says Souder. “She insisted on trying to find it for me even though she had already locked up and was trying to go home. That’s Mary.”

From 1971 to 2013, Poulin’s service was interrupted only once, in 1983, when she took a six-week maternity leave to give birth to her daughter who, incidentally, would graduate from the CM program in 2009. A tireless employee, Poulin was often the first one in the office each day. She will remain in the CM department offices until December 1, 2014, when Mandy Thomas will join the CM staff. True to her character, Poulin is determined to facilitate a smooth transition.

“I am thankful that she will be available to assist Mandy while she takes over the role that Mary has filled with such dedication and excellence for so many years,” Arthur says.

Once retired, Poulin and her husband will enjoy taking road trips, gardening, and sprucing up their home in Chico, completing projects there was no time for when she was working.

CM alumnus Nate Grimms, a successful project engineer for construction, mining, and engineering leader Kiewit, graduated from the program in 2008. He sums up Poulin’s role in the CM department nicely. “Mary is the face of construction management,” says Grimms. “She is the first one you see when you walk into Langdon, and she is immediately there to help you. She knows all, and I can’t imagine the CM department without her.”
The students are my favorite part of the job, I just try to get them what they need so they can keep going.
The lives we lead after we leave this auditorium should not be quiet, ordinary lives.
Friends, faculty, and family members joined graduating seniors in Laxson Auditorium on May 16, 2014, for the annual College of Engineering, Computer Science, and Construction Management Graduation Celebration, where construction management graduate Justin Besotes delivered a farewell address to his fellow classmates. His final words were both humble and inspiring.

“Whether we work in engineering, computer science, or construction management,” said Besotes, “we must not just focus on selfish ideals, prestige, or aspirations of grandeur. We must challenge ourselves as well as those around us to be civically engaged.”

Since arriving at CSU, Chico in 2012, Besotes has certainly walked that talk. He has been a tireless volunteer, taking central roles on three large community service projects completed by the students and faculty of the Department of Construction Management during the last three years. As a new transfer student, Besotes had barely unpacked his bags when he joined other construction management students traveling to Joplin, Missouri, to rebuild five homes that had been swept away in 2011 by an EF5 tornado that left behind it a 22-mile path of destruction.

“During that Blitz Build project, we encountered a record-breaking rainfall of 4 inches in a 24-hour period,” recalls Besotes. “Working in the rain, hand in hand with my peers and leaders in our College of ECC, I didn’t hear a single complaint.” Besotes credits that experience for opening his eyes to the tough work ethic, determination, and dedication to service that are integral to Chico State.

In 2013, with his first Blitz Build service effort under his belt, Besotes helped to lead a second Blitz Build project, which resulted in the construction of a barn that now serves as a visitor entrance and display facility for the Patrick Ranch Museum. Located just south of Chico in Durham, Patrick Ranch is a historical site dedicated to preserving local history and educating visitors about the agricultural significance of the area. It serves as a popular field trip venue for local elementary school children.

In 2014, Besotes served as project manager for a Blitz Build project that included the construction of transitional housing units and restoration of a historic home in Chico for the Salvation Army’s Adult Rehabilitation Program (see story on page 4). While at Chico State, Besotes was also active in the Design-Build Institute of America and served as the treasurer of the University’s student chapter of the Associated General Contractors of America.

Besotes concluded his remarks at the graduation ceremony by issuing a challenge to his fellow students: “The lives we lead after we leave this auditorium should not be quiet, ordinary lives, he said. I challenge my fellow graduates to take the connections you have made, the unique passions you have developed, and most of all, the degree you have so deservedly earned and do something relevant and positive with that knowledge.”

On April 6, 2014, Besotes received a 2014 CSU, Chico Outstanding Student Award for his dedicated service to communities both local and far. He graduated on with a bachelor’s degree in construction management.
CM ALUMNUS AND FACULTY MEMBER
DAVID SHIRAH

This past summer, construction management faculty member David Shirah was honored by the Design-Build Institute of America (DBIA) for his dedication to advancing the construction industry and design-build best practices. Shirah was selected for the 2014 DBIA Distinguished Leadership Award in the faculty category for his leadership in creating new curriculum that prepares the next generation of construction management professionals. This most recent award is one of many that Shirah has received for his work both inside and outside of the classroom.

“You would be hard pressed to find a more dedicated, hardworking, well-liked, and respected faculty member than David,” says department chair Joel Arthur. “His tireless efforts in instruction and community and university service, both inside and beyond the classroom, and the vast industry experience he brings to the construction management department are what help distinguish the CM program at Chico State as one of the best in the nation.”

Shirah started down a path of success as a student in the program for which he would later teach. He was a licensed general contractor when he pursued a degree in construction management from Chico State.

“When I attended Chico State, I was married, and my wife delivered our first child while I was sitting in Professor Rovane Younger’s Methods Analysis class,” Shirah recalls.

Shirah continued to work in the field while carrying a full course load, graduating from the CM program in 1986. For the next 21 years, he continued his work in all aspects of construction, managing projects and serving as lead consultant for a variety of Northern California companies including the Foundation Health Corporation in Rancho Cordova and PerForm Builders and the Yuba County Office of Education, both located in Marysville.

In 2007, Shirah was invited to join the CM faculty as a full-time lecturer.

“I always wanted to return to campus to teach,” says Shirah, “and thought that would at first be in the form of maybe teaching a class part time, but when Lori Brown [who was the CM department chair at the time] called me and said she needed a full-time instructor, I couldn’t resist the opportunity.”

He accepted the position and immediately began work on a master’s degree in education with an option in administration and leadership. He completed his master’s degree with distinction while continuing to teach CM classes and staying active in the construction field.

Shirah believes it is the combination of education and field experience that sets Chico CM faculty apart.

“I would not even consider teaching construction management without the education and years of experience in the industry,” says Shirah. “Faculty need to be industry practitioners and academics. I am always proud to boast that all of our (CM) faculty members are just that.”

To date, Shirah has amassed more than 30 years of practical experience in all aspects of design, preconstruction, and construction. Since joining the program as a faculty member, Shirah has taught a variety of lower- and upper-division courses, including Concepts of Construction, Computer-Aided Construction Management, Construction Materials and Systems, Principles of Soils Mechanics/Foundations, Construction Project Management, Estimating, and Construction Cost Management. He has served as faculty advisor to several student organizations, including chapters of the Associated General Contractors of America, the Design-Build Institute of America, and the Construction Management Association of America, and has led several Chico State student teams to win regional and national competitions including the Associated Schools of Construction National Preconstruction Competition, where Chico students took home the first place trophy in 2014 (see story on page 3). Shirah has also served as the co-faculty advisor for CM’s annual Blitz Build projects, including the most recent project constructing transitional housing duplexes for the Salvation Army (see story on page 4).

Shirah holds a California teaching credential and a California general contractor’s license.

“Chico State is one of a few CM programs in the nation that can offer DBIA professional certification to its students, because David is a certified instructor,” says Arthur. “This helps give our graduates an advantage in today’s complex construction industry.”

Shirah has been recognized on numerous occasions for his work inside and outside of the classroom. In March 2013, the Associated General Contractors of America named him the Associated General Contractors Education and Resource Foundation’s Outstanding Educator, and in 2012, he was named AGCAs National Educator of the Year. In 2010, he was granted the CSU, Chico Associated Students Pearls of Wisdom Award, and in 2011, he was named AGCAs Outstanding Student Organization Advisor Award.

“Of the awards I have received since joining the construction management faculty,” Shirah says, “the Pearls of Wisdom Award was special because it came from the students.”
Here’s What’s Coming Up...

- **February 4–7, 2015**
  Associated Schools of Construction Student Competition, Sparks, NV
- **February 18 to April 30, 2015**
  CM Spring 2015 Company Pre-Sessions and Interviews
- **April 10, 2015 (Friday)**
  CM Career Expo (tentative)
- **April 11, 2015 (Saturday)**
  Chico State Choose Chico Event
- **May 1, 2015 (Friday)**
  CM Annual Alumni Golf Tournament and Dinner

For more information about any of these events, contact Joel Arthur at jarthur@csuchico.edu or 530-898-5216.

We Need Your Stories...

Beginning with the next issue of this newsletter, we would like to feature some of the many outstanding accomplishments of our alumni. If you (or someone you know) have achieved extraordinary professional success or have made the world a better place through your work, please send us a short article so we can choose among the best of the best. Send to Joel Arthur, department chair, at jarthur@csuchico.edu, or call 530-898-4292.

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