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Student Competitions Coming Soon

It is that time of year again when some of our best and brightest students are preparing themselves to compete during the month of February in both the NAHB Student Chapters Competitions held in conjunction with the 2008 NAHB International Builders' Show in Orlando and the Associated Schools of Construction Competition in Reno. We are sending two teams to Orlando, one 2-year team and one 4-year team. Due to the interest in the Reno Competition, we are sponsoring an unprecedented seven teams to compete there.

All of the teams have been engaged in preparation during this past semester. The Orlando residential construction competitors, however, have received their respective competition problems. Both competitions were established to offer students a real life residential construction experience. The 2-year team competition began on September 21, 2007 when the problem was mailed to our school and the solution to the problem was postmarked and returned by December 15th. The project this year challenged our team to develop a set of working drawings, a construction schedule, estimates, options, and price information for a real-life home to be built in Orlando, Florida. Our team's solution is now in the hands of the judges and will be defended by our team at in Orlando on February 14th.

The 4-year competitors received their competition problem on October 15th. They are working diligently on their project which is coming due on January 29th. This year's problem involves all aspects of estimating, scheduling, marketing, advertising, financing, and selling an entire residential subdivision in Orlando, Florida. Our 4-year team's hard work will also pay off

when they present their solutions to a judging panel of residential building industry professionals at the International Builder's Show.

Interest in commercial construction is increasing at BYU-Idaho as is shown by more students wanting to compete in the Reno competitions. To prepare themselves to compete more effectively, team members have been studying mock problems and holding "mini-competitions" this past semester. We are sponsoring one team to compete in each of the following areas: Heavy Civil, Building Information Modeling (BIM), LEEDS, Commercial, Design Build, Residential, and Pre-Construction Services. Team competitors travel to Reno this February and compete with over 1,000 students coming from all over the United States, but more particularly from the Intermountain and West Coast Divisions.

We are excited about our students' abilities and are grateful to them for representing Brigham Young University - Idaho so well in all they do. We wish them the greatest success. We will let you know what happens at all of the competitions in a future newsletter.

Thank you for all you do for our students.

Patrick Huish
Department of Architecture and Construction
Brigham Young University

Practice What You Preach

Constructors in the nation continue to demand that universities increase the skill level of graduate students. "We want greater literacy, stronger legal background, etc, etc, etc."

The hypocrisy of those demands is a lack of self-governance on our industry's professional performance level. We have our own shortfalls to address- budget control, for instance.

In the decade plus that, Construction Management delivery has overtaken the domination of competitive hard bidding, a majority of general contractors and many architects have earned a CM license or just

changed their shingle to self-proclaim CM capability. Precious few have added any level of training.

Budget control, with the addition of CM's to a project team, should have improved. But it has not. Who is supposed to be minding that store? Today many projects are reporting budget overruns of 10-50%, and blaming it on rising material costs. Come on...that may be part of the equation, but it's not alone. Lack of diligent monitoring during design is a major factor. It's time for professionals to turn the trend around. Our industry reputation could use the boost.

Glenn Arrington
Starr Corporation

Combined Expertise is Essential

I was really excited by what Patrick has written this month about the competitions. There is something about this that makes the blood start to flow and gets the level of excitement up. My hat's off to the faculty for doing all that they do to prepare these young people to go into these competitions and compete as well as they do. There is such a broad range of things that need to be taught, explained and understood. What a great credit it is to them to be able to do as they have been doing.

I want to thank Patrick for his contribution this month. I know that Brother Jensen has set up a rotating schedule for the different department members to contribute each month and that is great. It keeps us in touch with what is happening within the Department and with the students and gives us a better idea of how to prepare to come to our Advisory Board meetings twice a year and the kinds of things that we can bring to that. Thank you, Patrick.

I read Glenn's comments just prior to leaving for a trip to Salt Lake recently and I have to say I've thought them all the way to Salt Lake. Unfortunately, Glenn has hit some things squarely on the head. From a designer's standpoint, we always enter into a project with a great deal of in trepidation in terms of whether or not the design will match the budget. As Glenn probably well knows, most designers are square foot estimators. We find that it is just as difficult for us to estimate a project with incomplete documents as it is for

the contractor. In the past, most of the constructors have told us that they are not capable of giving anything other than very rough figures until documents are 75% or 80% complete. At that point in time, the client has his expectations set, has given all of his input, and it has been a long tug-of-war trying to keep his wish list and his budget concept in line. In many cases in initial project discussions, we have thrown out project costs to owners that we almost feel embarrassed to mention. They seem ridiculously high. Yet, as the project reaches final completion and bids come in, they seem to be much more realistic than even we anticipated. We have a saying at our office, "Take ridiculous and times it by two and you're probably about right." For a number of years we have felt that forming the design build team early in the process was the best way to approach a project. We have felt that that would provide meaningful budget input from those who deal every day with the costs, the contractor. We have had mixed results. Some contractors don't seem to know how to make projections, others are very good at it. We recently completed a large project where we brought the contractor on board very early. Based on conceptual drawings, his estimate was \$8,000,000. The owner told us that was just fine, that's what he was able to finance. Over a period of 3 ½ to 4 years, the budget grew to \$10,000,000, then \$11,000,000, then \$12,000,000, then \$13,000,000, and then ended finally at \$13,250,000. At the end of the project, the project estimator/manager made the comment, "Gosh, we sure missed that one."

In spite of all that, I still feel it is best to work with good reputable team members, form the team early, and look at the budget as thoroughly and as completely as possible as a team. Many



clients and owners are realizing the same thing. The combined expertise is essential.

It is these types of tid-bits of information and understanding that the students can benefit from as they move into the workplace, and begin to understand that the dynamics of the financing and budgeting in design and construction of projects. Glenn has been very correct in what he is saying about the struggle that our industry faces.

On another note, we would like this newsletter to become somewhat of a forum. To say it in a very short way, at any point in time, if there is a member of the Department that has a request for information, a question, or need of help, we hope that you will submit that to our office and we will see that it is published with the next newsletter for the Board to respond to. At the same time, if there is a Board member, whether it is your turn to contribute to the newsletter or not, who has a bit of insight that they would like to offer to the Department in terms of trends, industry happenings, curriculum items, or anything else which would be related to what the Department is trying to do, please feel free to email it to us and we will also include those items. We will continue to ask for regular contributors from the Board and from the Department, but we certainly want to make it open to anyone who has a need or has a contribution to make.

We appreciate all that all of you do. We hope that you had a great holiday season and look forward to a good new year. Thank you.

Scott L Nielson, AIA
Chairman – BYUI ACMS Advisory Board