Construction Management Builds on Winning Tradition

By: Desiré Bennett

The University of Cincinnati’s ABC and ASC competition teams continue their winning tradition at the 2013 Construction Management Student Competition and the ASC Heavy Civil Estimating Competition, coming out on top as champions.

Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) student members from colleges and universities across the nation traveled to Las Vegas, NV to compete in the 2013 Construction Management Competition, held Nov 2-6, 2013.

According to Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc. the ABC's Construction Management Competition is a hallmark competition that promotes careers in construction management and is designed to challenge construction knowledge, time management, organizational, and presentation skills.

This year, UC’s construction management team, “Phoenix Building Company,” placed 1st place overall, beating out 20 other schools! The following students rose to the challenge, securing another win and continuing a tradition of excellence:

- **Ryan Clemens**, project manager
- **Peter Strawman**, estimator
- **Keith Schlater**, superintendent
- **Jessica Cobb**, safety
- **Treg Cunningham**, alternate
- **Brandon Okel**, alternate
UC’s Construction Management teams have won first or second place overall in three of the last five years, and have picked up additional awards in the specific categories of safety, estimating, and project management & scheduling in each of the last five years.

The competition is designed to test each team’s construction knowledge and presentation skills by giving them a real-world project. This year’s project was to prepare a proposal for a three-story medical office building located in Orlando, FL.

Each team receives a Request for Proposal (RFP) from the Owner (the judges) six weeks prior to the competition and is required to provide a project schedule, logistics plan, project management plan, estimate, safety and quality plans.

Project manager Ryan Clemens explains. “The proposal is due the day of the competition, and once this RFP is turned in, each team is given a change to the project. This change is implemented into the RFP in six hours with no external contact with anyone [permitted],” he said.

The proposals are then reviewed and a “short list” is chosen. If a team makes the short list, they are required to make a 10 minute presentation and then administer a five minute Q&A. All of these steps are graded separately and then combined at the end to find the top three teams overall and the top three teams in estimating, safety, quality and project management.

Clemens says that although there were a few bumps in the road during the creation of the proposal, ultimately the team was able to further solidify the Construction Management program’s reputation. “This competition allows UC students to show the nation and the construction industry the caliber of students that UC produces,” he said. “It also markets the CM program to prospective students. UC is one of the best schools for Construction Management in the nation.”

Professor Amanda Albrecht, who serves as a faculty advisor to the Construction Management team, says that UC’s participation in this competition is important because it provides UC with an opportunity to compete against other Construction Management and Civil Engineering programs on a national level.

“It gives our students an opportunity to network with the judges and members of the ABC board. The ABC is a national organization of construction contractors, subcontractors, and related businesses,” she said. “[And] it gives students an experience that is similar to a real-life project bid scenario.”

Albrecht believes that winning the competition shows the strength of UC’s Construction Management program and gives students the chance to showcase their skills to potential future employers. “It also raises the profile of UC’s Construction Management program in the eyes of the leaders of ABC member companies who attend the ABC conference, of which the student competition is a part.”
UC Team “Phil Dert Excavation” secured the 1st place spot at the 2013 Associated Schools of Construction (ASC) Heavy Civil Estimating Competition. The team travelled to Downers Grove, IL. Oct. 17-19 to compete against several universities from across the Great Lakes Region.

The competition, which represents a real-world bidding situation, gives student teams an opportunity to create and present project proposals as if they were bidding an actual project. This year’s project, which was already completed by a company sponsoring the competition, was a bridge reconstruction. The bridge, which is located in a congested area and spans a couple of sets of very busy railroad tracks, is located in downtown Atlanta, GA.

UC Team “Phil Dert Excavation” consisted of Rob Lichter, Steve Salyers, Dan Droesch, Jesse Deane, Seth Roberts, and Mike Saylor.

Team member Mike Saylor talks about the parameters of the project. “We received a packet of information including bid form, drawings, specifications, material and subcontractor quotes at 6 AM Thursday morning and bids were due by 10 PM that night,” he explains.

Saylor says that one of the biggest challenges the team faced was keeping the "bigger picture" in mind. “It is very easy to want to dive in as soon as you receive the project and start picking apart the small details,” he said. “But it is important to step back and look at the project as a whole to gain a better understanding of all the project's components.”

The team was able to overcome these challenges through teamwork and communication. “Each team member had a specific aspect they were looking at and I think everyone did a great job of not only diving into their part but relating their part to the project as a whole.”

Saylor believes that UC’s participation in the competition is important for two specific reasons. “One, it shows off the construction management program at UC. The university has a history of
doing very well in these competitions and each victory is proof that UC's construction management program is top notch,” he said. “Two, the competition shows the importance of the co-op program,” Saylor explains. “Co-op experience plays a huge role in understanding the means and methods of a project – and being out in the field and seeing how projects are constructed is the best knowledge for these types of competitions.”

Professor Albrecht agrees. “I attribute much of our strong performance in these competitions to the strength of our co-op program. These competitions are designed to simulate “real-life” situations, which many of our students have already lived through, to some degree, in their co-op experiences.”

Congratulations to both teams for these outstanding victories!

The teams would like to extend gratitude to their sponsors and supporters, with special thanks to:

**The Ohio Valley ABC Chapter**
**Neyer Properties:** Jeff Kmet
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**CURT:** Greg Sizemore
**UC Faculty:** Professor Emeritus George Suckarieh
**UC Students:** Michael Arnold (CM ’18) and Stephanie Schmidt (DAAP ’17)