Bearcats Bid It Best
By: Ashley Duvelius

On February 15-16, 2013, the Construction Management UC Bearcat Team participated and placed first in the Ohio Constructors Association (OCA) Student Estimating Competition. The two-day competition was held at the Hilton Easton in Columbus, OH and UC was one of more than a dozen collegiate construction management and civil engineering programs competing. The UC CEAS Bearcats took home the top prize of $2000. This is the first time in 12 years that UC has earned 1st place at the OCA Competition!

From left to right: Molly Schellenberg, Robert Lichter, Professor Daniel Frondorf, Michael Saylor, Jacob Seim, Luke Wurzelbacher, Elliott Petrie, and their industry coach, Kate Holden.

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Toledo, Ohio Northern, and Ohio University. The UC CEAS Bearcats took home the top prize of $2000. This is the first time in 12 years that UC has earned 1st place at the OCA Competition!

The Construction Management UC Bearcat Team included Robert Lichter, Elliott Petrie (who’s returning to the competition for the second year), Michael Saylor, Molly Schellenberg, Jacob Seim and Luke Wurzelbacher (who’s returning for his fourth year). Daniel Frondorf, Certified Professional Estimator and CEAS adjunct assistant professor, served as the team’s advisor. The team also received guidance from their industry advisor, Kate Holden of the John R. Jurgensen Company, and from Hazem M. Elzarka, PhD and CEAS professor.

Construction management and civil engineering teams participating in the competition were tasked with performing a cost estimate on approximately a dozen bid items. Teams were provided with certain parameters and were thrown various “curve balls” throughout the day on Friday, with the bids being due by 5 pm. The Bearcats’ calculations came to a final bid price of about 5.9 million dollars. They came closest to the actual estimate as the project occurred in real life in 2009, and the winning bid for the job was about 5.7 million dollars.

The bids were opened and the lowest bidders were allowed to choose their times for their formal presentations on Saturday. During presentations, a panel of 6 judges, who are all industry professionals, evaluated the teams’ bid preparation techniques, their handling of the “curve balls,” their understanding of the scope of the work and their oral presentation skills. Teams were to present as if they were presenting the job to the upper management team of a construction company.

Team members applied numerous techniques and knowledge they had gained from their co-op assignments and from the CEAS classroom. “The event was a great opportunity for us as students—we were able to experience a real-world bidding situation. The competition also presented significant networking opportunities. The panel of judges was formed by many of the biggest heavy civil contractors. The students, therefore, get a lot of face time with potential employers looking to hire graduates in the near future or to bring students in on co-op assignments,” explains Rob.

The team showcases their top prize check.
Mike emphasizes the importance of the students’ co-op work as he says, “It is hard to prepare for a heavy highway project because each project can consist of many different items. Usually, the chosen project contains a unique aspect that makes the project different from others which makes it hard to prepare for. We relied heavily on our co-op experiences and classes during the competition. Co-op experience plays a huge aspect in understanding the means and methods of a project.”

“The members of this team also competed in a competition in October, but did not do as well as we would have hoped. It was very nice to redeem ourselves,” comments Luke.

Molly adds, “We were very excited to win this competition. It was my first time attending this competition, and it was great to show off our talents to professionals in the Ohio area. We were proud to bring success to the University of Cincinnati.”

Speaking of proud, no one could be more proud of the students than their own advisor, Professor Frondorf. He reflects, “For me, as their teacher, I felt like a proud parent. I also feel a little validated to know that what we review in class is applicable to the skills they need not only for the competition but also for the real world, which was simulated very well by the OCA in this event. I think I smiled all the way back to Cincinnati.”

Congratulations Bearcats, on bidding it best and bringing home the first top prize in 12 years!