New Professor Adds to Strengths of SAS Faculty
By: Ashley Duvelius

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CEAS’ School of Advanced Structures (SAS) recently made a new addition to their outstanding faculty. Amanda Albrecht, PE, Esq., and assistant professor of construction management, simply couldn’t resist the opportunity to come back to UC to teach. The highly regarded lawyer brings her expertise of legal matters, construction management, and civil engineering to the classroom in what is already blossoming into a bright career.

Albrecht earned her bachelor’s degree in civil engineering and master’s degree in construction management from Washington University in St. Louis. Upon graduation, she joined the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, working first as a geotechnical engineer and later as a project engineer. She later came to southeast Ohio to work in project management for a commercial general contractor, Miller-Valentine Construction.

When our country’s recent tough economic times began to impact the construction industry, Albrecht decided to refocus her interests in the legal and business aspects of the industry. She returned to school and earned her juris doctorate degree from UC’s College of Law.

During law school, Albrecht worked with a team of construction litigators at the downtown law firm Frost Brown Todd. She joined the firm as an attorney upon graduation. While at FBT, Albrecht was part of a team of four lawyers who represented structural steel subcontractors in a lawsuit regarding extra work they had performed at the Ascent at Roebling’s Bridge, a luxury condo development in Covington, KY, for which the subcontractors had not been paid. Albrecht and her colleagues fought to recover the payment due to their clients during a long 11-day trial.

“It is relatively rare for commercial construction projects to actually make it to trial without settling first, so this trial was an exciting opportunity. The most remarkable part of it all was that after such a long trial, the jury came back after only about 40 minutes with a verdict in favor of our clients. It was a great feeling after several years of hard work, and I’m sure even more so for our clients!” reflects Albrecht.

Albrecht started teaching evening classes at UC this past winter quarter as an adjunct professor. Having loved teaching and advising the students, she felt honored to join the faculty as a full-time assistant professor in August of this year.

Albrecht says, “Everyone here—the faculty, the staff, and the students—is great! I was pleasantly impressed by the vast array of commitments our student organizations continually
make and carry out, from competitions to charity work. I’m excited to contribute to this well-established, distinguished curriculum.”

Albrecht has certainly wasted no time in becoming involved with the students. Along with George Suckarieh, CEAS SAS professor and PhD, Albrecht advised four teams of students who competed in the Associated Schools of Construction (ASC) Region III’s 9th consecutive Regional Competition in Chicago, IL. The duo provided students with professional contacts and resources when necessary, and helped the teams in strategizing for the competitions and advising on the logistics required for travel.

Each of the four teams competed in separate subspecialties of construction: Design-Build, Preconstruction, Commercial, and Heavy Civil. The teams placed first, second, second, and fifth, respectively. “I’m so proud of the students! They performed exceptionally and won the ‘medal count’ at the competition, out of over twenty other universities.” Albrecht noted that Heavy Highway team lost several points in the scoring because they turned in their bid three minutes late, but still finished in the top half of their category. “They learned a valuable life lesson, though – get your bids in on time!” Albrecht adds.

Albrecht is also advising a group of students in the Construction Students Association who are fielding UC’s first team to compete in Cincinnati CANstruction, an event in which participants compete to build giant structures made entirely out of canned food, which are then displayed downtown and later donated to food pantries. “The project requires students to apply skills relevant to their academic training, such as aesthetic and structural design, estimating, scheduling, and budgeting. The other participants are local design and construction firms so it is also a great networking opportunity that provides visibility for our students and the University.” Albrecht notes. The CANstruction sculptures will be displayed in February and March at the Weston Art Gallery downtown.
Albrecht intends to continue teaching at SAS and looks forward to becoming more involved with the student organizations and outreach to industry.

Paul Orkwis, PhD and school director of SAS, comments, “Professor Albrecht’s background is uniquely suited to teaching construction management students. With an initial degree in civil engineering, a masters in construction management and a juris doctorate, and extensive experience in industry she brings multiple perspectives and experience to the classroom. She is also an outstanding role model for young women who want to work in a very male-dominated industry.”