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Construction Management is now an academic department

Terminal B at Sacramento International Airport. The San Francisco 49ers stadium under construction in Santa Clara. The Sheraton Grand, PERS headquarters and Sutter Health’s new Women’s and Children’s Center in midtown Sacramento.

Look at the major building projects around Northern California, and there is a good chance that a graduate of Sacramento State’s Construction Management program had a hand in it.

On campus, Construction Management alums have worked on 14 of the last 15 projects, including The WELL, Broad Athletic Fieldhouse, Hornet Bookstore and Parking Structures I and II.

“We’re teaching them engineering and management skills so that they can hit the ground running,” says Professor Mikael Anderson.

After 40 years as a successful, respected program within the University’s Department of Civil Engineering, Construction Management this fall became an independent academic department in the College of Engineering and Computer Science. Anderson is its first chair.

“We’ve wanted to become our own department for as long as I’ve been here,” says Anderson, a licensed general contractor and professional civil engineer who came to the University in 2003.

Sacramento State’s four-year Construction Management program is one of the oldest among California’s universities and is accredited through the American Council for Construction Education. Its graduates earn a bachelor of science degree with a minor in business administration.

“We’re ‘practical-oriented,’” says Anderson. “Literally every week, our students are at some job site in the area, learning. We try to give them a general construction education, a sampling. Our faculty bring years of engineering and construction experience to the classroom.

“The majority of our graduates seek careers in the general construction industry, working for commercial, heavy civil, mixed use and specialty mechanical and electrical
contractors. Occasionally, we have students with an entrepreneurial mindset who will start their own construction company or work to take their parents’ business to the next level. They are managers when they come out of this program. They are managing work. They are managing people,” Anderson says.

Recent grads are working as, for instance, estimators, project engineers, pre-construction managers, project managers, project superintendents and project control specialists.

Of the 200 students currently enrolled in Construction Management, 10 percent are women. Starting salaries for graduates range from $48,000 to $75,000, depending on experience and previous internships. The program had 100 percent job placement of its May 2012 graduates.

The department is supported by an advisory board, the nonprofit Sacramento Construction Management Education Foundation, which raises money to, in part, provide scholarships, fund annual Construction Management events and support students who compete in national contests. Sacramento State’s Construction Management team took second place out of 50 schools and was awarded $2,500 at this year’s National Mechanical Contractors Association of America student competition in Orlando, Fla.

The team also has won numerous first- and second-place awards at the annual Associated Schools of Construction student competitions.

“For our size program, we have by far dominated the competitions over the years,” Anderson says.

For media assistance, contact Sacramento State’s Office of Public Affairs at (916) 278-6156.
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